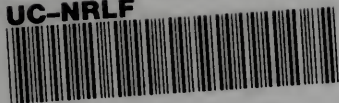


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BERNARDIN DE ST. PIERRE



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BERNARDIN DE SAINT PIERRE

REPRODUCED FROM AN ENGRAVING BY RIBAUT AFTER LAFITTE

BERNARDIN DE ST. PIERRE

BY

ARVÈDE BARINE

TRANSLATED BY J. E. GORDON

PREFACE BY AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

WITH PORTRAIT

London

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PREFACE.

THE life of Bernardin de St. Pierre is so unusual, so interesting, so suggestive and amusing, that the grumpiest of Englishmen need not complain of the fact that no series of Great French Writers would be complete which did not contain the name of the author of Paul and Virginia. Even Britons must accept the judgment of other nations about their own authors. Our duty is to comprehend a verdict we are powerless to upset. Dorian women, as Gorgo says in the famous ode of Theocritus, have a right to chatter in a Dorian accent, and a great French writer is not necessarily the worse for a strong infusion of French sentiment.

St. Pierre was no ordinary person, either as man or author. His was a strong and original character, more bent on action than on literature. Though a master of style and a great painter in words, he was ever a preacher, a sermonneur, as

St. Beuve calls him. His masterpiece—as the French reckon Paul and Virginia to be—came by chance, and is but a chapter in a huge treatise, a parable told by the way in a voluminous gospel. It is as if Ruskin's chef d'œuvre were a novelette, or as if Carlyle's story had been a perfect whole instead of a fragment and a failure.

To understand Paul and Virginia aright one should read the Études de la Nature, first published in 1784. Our grandparents read them greedily enough, either in the original, or in the excellent translation of Dr. Henry Hunter, the accomplished minister of the Scots Church, London Wall. A hundred years have, however, pressed heavily upon these Studies, but to this day a tender grace clings to them. Even so will our own descendants in 1984 turn the pages of Ruskin and inhale a stray whiff of the breath which once animated a generation.

Bernardin de St. Pierre was as obstinate a theorist as ever lived, and his theory was that Providence had fashioned the whole world with one intent only, namely, the happiness of man. That man was not happy, St. Pierre sorrowfully admitted; but there was no reason whatever, save his own folly, why he should not be as happy as the days were long. Nothing could shake this faith of St. Pierre's. The terrible catastrophes of life—plague, pestilence, and famine, earthquakes and

shipwreck—counted with him as nothing. That sombre view of human affairs which so oppressed with gloom the great mind of Bishop Butler, and drove the lighter but humaner spirit of Voltaire into a revolt half desperate, half humorous, never affected the imagination of St. Pierre, who none the less had a tender heart, had travelled far by land and sea, and often had laid down his head to rest with the poor and the miserable.

Walking once in the fertile district of Caux, he has described how he saw something red running across the fields at some distance, and making towards the great road. "I quickened my pace and got up in time enough to see that they were two little girls in red jackets and wooden shoes, who, with much difficulty, were scrambling through the ditch which bounded the road. The tallest, who might be about six or seven years old, was crying bitterly. 'Child,' said I to her, 'what makes you cry, and whither are you going at so early an hour?' 'Sir,' replied she, 'my poor mother is very ill. There is not a mess of broth to be had in all our parish. We are going to that church in the bottom to see if the Curé can find us some. I am crying because my little sister is not able to walk any farther.' As she spoke, she wiped her eyes with a bit of canvas which served her for a petticoat. On her raising up the rag to her face, I could perceive she had not the semblance

of a shift. The abject misery of the children, so poor, in the midst of plains so fruitful, wrung my heart. The relief which I could administer them was small indeed. I myself was then on my way to see misery in other forms."

These woebegone little figures scrambling across a great French ditch in search of broth attest the tenderness of St. Pierre's heart, whose descriptions are free from all taint of affectation and insincerity. He has neither the leer of Sterne nor the affected stare of Chateaubriand. He had, however, a theory which was proof against all sights and sounds. The great earthquake of Lisbon is reported to have made many atheists, and certainly no event of the kind has ever so seized hold of men's imaginations. St. Pierre brushes it contemptuously on one side. Says he in his seventh Study: "The inhabitants of Lisbon know well that their city has been several times shattered by shocks of this kind, and that it is imprudent to build in stone. To persons who can submit to live in a house of wood earthquakes have nothing formidable. Naples and Portici are perfectly acquainted with the fate of Herculaneum. After all earthquakes are not universal; they are local and periodical. Pliny has observed," &c., &c.

And so he works his way through the long list of human miseries. Tigers, indeed! Who need care for tigers? Have they not dusky stripes

perceptible a great way off on the yellow ground of their skin? Do not their eyes sparkle in the dark? How easy to avoid a tiger! With all the enthusiasm of a theorist, he heaps up his authorities for statements great and small, and levels his quotations from all and sundry at his reader's head, much after the fashion of Mr. Buckle. Of a truly scientific spirit these Studies have not a trace, but they contain much attractive and delightful writing, and though dominated by a fantastic and provoking theory, are full of shrewdness and wisdom as well as of lofty eloquence.

Thus whilst combating what he conceives to be the error of supposing that morality is determined by climate, he points out that there is as much difference in manners, in opinions, in habiliments, and even in physiognomy, between a French opera-actor and a Capuchin friar as there is between a Swede and a Chinese, and concludes by observing: "It is not climate which regulates the morality of man—it is opinion—it is education—and such is their power that they triumph not only over latitudes, but even over temperament."

St. Pierre's views on governments and supreme authority are worth reading, even after a course of Bodin or Hobbes. He says in the same seventh Study:—

"Without paying regard to the common division

of governments into democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, which are only at bottom political forms that determine nothing as to either their happiness or their power, we shall insist only on their moral constitution. Every government of whatever description is internally happy and respectable abroad when it bestows on all its subjects their natural right of acquiring fortune and honours and the contrary takes place when it reserves to a particular class of citizens the benefits which ought to be common to all. It is not sufficient to prescribe limits to the people and to restrain them within those limits by terrifying phantoms. They quickly force the person who puts them in motion to tremble more than themselves. When human policy locks the chain round the ancle of a slave, Divine Justice rivets the other end round the neck of the tyrant."

Nor is there much amiss with St. Pierre's political economy.

"It has always appeared to me strangely unaccountable that in France where there are such numerous and such judicious establishments, we should have ministers of superintendence in foreign affairs, for war, the marine, finance commerce, manufactures, the clergy, public buildings, horsemanship, and so on, but never one for agriculture. It proceeds, I am afraid, from the contempt in which the peasantry are held. All

men, however, are sureties for each other, and independently of the uniform stature and configuration of the human race, I would exact no other proof that all spring from one and the same original. It is from the puddle by the side of the poor man's hovel which has been robbed of the little brook whose stream sweetened it the epidemic plague shall issue forth to devour the lordly inhabitants of the neighbouring castle."

But I must stop my quotations, which have been made only because by their means better than by any other the English reader can be made to perceive the manner of man the author of *Paul and Virginia* was, and how it came about that he should write such a book. *St. Pierre* was a missionary. He longed to convince the whole world that he was right, and to win them over to his side and make them see eye to eye with him. Hence his fervour and his force. He had not the genius of *Rousseau*, with whom he had some odd conversations, but by virtue of his wondrous sincerity he has an effectiveness which vies with the charm of the elder and greater writer. There is an air of good faith about *St. Pierre*. Though he deliberately sets to work and manufactures descriptions, he seems to do so with as much honesty of purpose and of detail as *Gilbert White* made his famous jottings in the parsonage of *Selborne*.

Of Paul and Virginia little need be said. It is a French classic, by the same title as Robinson Crusoe is a British one. Defoe has made English boys by the thousand want to be shipwrecked, and St. Pierre has made French boys by the thousand want to cry. The position of Paul and Virginia in French literature is attested in a score of ways. Editions abound both for the rich and for the poor. It is everywhere, in every bookshop and on every bookstall. The author of Mademoiselle de Maupin has left it on record that Paul and Virginia made his youthful soul burn within him, and he solemnly pronounces it a dangerous book. That Theophile Gautier was an expert in such matters cannot be disputed. His evidence, therefore, must be admitted, though as expert evidence it may be criticised. St. Beuve is unfailing in praise of Paul and Virginia. He discerns in it the notes of reality and freshness, the dew of youth is upon it—it is sweet and comely, “Ce qui distingue à jamais cette pastorale gracieuse, c’est qu’elle est vraie, d’une réalité humaine et sensible ; aux grâces et aux jeux de l’enfance ne succède point une adolescence idéale et fabuleuse. Dès le moment où Virginie s’est sentie agitée d’un mal inconnu et où ses beaux yeux bleus se sont marbrés de noir, nous sommes dans la passion, et ce charmant petit livre que Fontanes mettait un peu trop banalement entre le Télémaque et la

Mort d'Abel, je le classerai, moi, entre Daphnis et Chloe et cet immortel IV^e livre en l'honneur de Didon. Un génie tout Virgilien y respire."

That arch-sentimentalist, Napoleon Bonaparte, kept Paul et Virginie under his pillow during his Italian campaign; so at least he assured St. Pierre, but as he is known to have made precisely the same remark to Tom Paine about the Rights of Man, he must not be understood au pied de la lettre. He is known to have read the book over again in the last sad days at St. Helena, and no one can doubt that it was much to his taste.

I cannot disguise from myself—I wish I could—my own dislike of the book. We may, many of us, be disposed to believe, with Lord Palmerston, that all babies are born good; but we feel tolerably certain that no babies, if left to themselves, would grow up like Paul and Virginia. What is more, we would not wish them to do so. To tell the truth, we cannot weep over Virginia. A young woman who chooses to drown in sight of land and her lover, with strong arms ready to save her, rather than disarrange her clothing, makes us contemptuously angry. Bashfulness is not modesty, nor can it be necessary to die under circumstances which might possibly render a blush becoming. But the French cannot be got to see this, and Paul et Virginie was written for the French, to whom the spectacle of the drowning

Virginie "une main sur ses habits, l'autre sur son cœur," has long seemed sublime—a human sacrifice to la pudeur. "Et nous aussi," exclaims one fervent spirit, "si nous avions été sur cette grève fatale, nous aurions crié à Virginie: 'Laissez-vous sauver! quittez vos vêtements, oubliez un instant les scrupules de la pudeur. Vivez! N'entendons nous pas cependant, en dépit de notre pitié—une voix plus délicate et plus sévère que les cris de tous ces spectateurs émus par tant de dangers et tant de courage—Virginie ne peut pas avec le cœur innocent et pur que Dieu lui a fait, avec le chaste amour qu'elle a pour Paul, Virginie ne peut pas dépouiller ses vêtements et se laisser sauver pas ce matelot. Qu'elle meure donc pour rester aussi pure que son âme! Qu'elle meure, puisqu'elle a su entendre, à travers les mugissements de l'orage et les cris des spectateurs, la voix douce, mais puissante, de la pudeur.'"

It is interesting after this explosion of French feeling to call to mind Carlyle's remarks about Paul and Virginia in the second book of his prose-poem, "The French Revolution."

"Still more significant are two books produced on the eve of the ever-memorable explosion itself, and read eagerly by all the world—St. Pierre's Paul et Virginie and Louvet's Chevalier de Faublas—noteworthy books, which may be considered as the last speech of old Feudal France. In the

first there rises melodiously, as it were, the wail of a moribund world. Everywhere wholesome nature is in unequal conflict with diseased perfidious Art; cannot escape from it in the lowest hut, in the remotest island of the sea. Ruin and Death must strike down the loved one, and what is most significant of all, death even here not by necessity, but by etiquette. What a world of prurient corruption lies visible in that super-sublime of modesty! Yet on the whole our good St. Pierre is musical, poetical, though most morbid. We will call his book the swan-song of old dying France."

So far Carlyle, who was a sentimentalist at heart.

It is noticeable, however, that M. Barine, whose biography of St. Pierre is here introduced to the English reader, and who, I have no doubt, represents modern criticism, lays no stress upon the death of Virginia, observing with much composure, "The shipwreck of the Saint Geran and the death of Virginia, which made us all shed floods of tears when we were children, are, it must be allowed, somewhat melodramatic, and, from a literary point of view, very inferior to the passionate scenes" (p. 173). It is as a love-story, glowing and fervent, full of the unrestfulness and tumult which are the harbingers of passion in virgin breasts, that Paul et Virginia must now be

regarded. So M. Barine says, and he is undoubtedly right ; and the English reader, however much his moral sense rejects the climax of the tale, must be dull of heart who does not recognise, even though he fail to admire, the power which depicts the woeful plight of poor Virginia when she becomes Love's thrall.

The pages of *Paul et Virginie* are frequently enlivened by aphorism and ennobled by description. One of its sayings is quoted with great effect by St. Beuve in his *Causerie on Cowper*. “ *Il y a de plus dans la femme une gaieté légère qui dissipe la tristesse de l'homme.*” In the same way there is a certain quality in the writings of St. Pierre, perceptible even to the foreigner, which renders acquiescence in the judgment of France upon his fame as a writer easier than might have been expected.

BERNARDIN DE ST. PIERRE.



CHAPTER I.

YOUTH—YEARS OF TRAVEL.

I N looking over the collection of the portraits of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, we are witnesses of a strange transformation. That of Lafitte, engraved in 1805, during the lifetime of the original, represents a fine old man with a long face, strongly marked features, and locks of white hair falling to his shoulders. His expression has more penetration than sweetness, and certain vertical lines between the brows reveal an unaccommodating temper. This is certainly no ordinary man; but we are not surprised that he had many enemies.

In 1818, four years after the death of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, a less realistic work begins to idealize his features for posterity. An engraving by Frédéric Lignon from a drawing by Girodet represents him as younger, and in an attitude of inspiration. There is an almost

heavenly look upon his innocent face, surrounded by an abundant crop of hair artistically curled and falling to his shoulders. Everything in this second portrait is rounded off and toned down, and this is only the beginning of things. The type created by Girodet became more angelic and more devoid of significance at each new reproduction. The eyes get larger, the features are less marked, and we have a hero of Romance, a dreamy, sentimental youth, the apocryphal Bernardin de Saint-Pierre which a vignette of the time of the Restoration shows us, seated at a cottage door, his eyes cast up to heaven, his handkerchief in his hand, while his dog fixes his eyes tenderly upon him, and a negress contemplates him with rapture. Legend has decidedly got the better of history. An insipid and rather ridiculous silhouette has insinuated itself in the place of a countenance full of originality and energy.

At the present day we do a service to the author of *Paul and Virginia* by treating him without ceremony. The time has come to resuscitate him as he appeared to his contemporaries, with his lined forehead, and his uneasy expression, lest the mawkish Bernardin de Saint-Pierre invented by sentimentalists should make us forget altogether the real man who dared to disagree with the philosophers, and to beard the

Academy. One appreciates his work better, knowing that it did not spring from a purely elegiac soul, but from a deliberate and dogged mind which knew what it wanted, and did not play its part of literary pioneer at random.

Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was born at Havre in 1737, of a family in which there was little common sense, but great pretensions. The father believed himself to be of noble origin, and was never tired of discoursing to his children of their illustrious ancestors. He had three sons, and one daughter. One of the sons, who took his ancestral glory quite seriously, unable to bear up against the mortifications which awaited him in the world, went out of his mind. The daughter, refusing with disdain all the offers of marriage she received, repented when it was too late, and ended her days in sadness and obscurity. The mother was good and kind, free from vanity, and richly gifted with imagination. Bernardin was fond of relating a conversation which they had had together when he was quite a child about the growing corn. Mme. de Saint-Pierre had explained to him that if every man took his sheaf of corn there would not be enough on the earth for every one, from which they came to the conclusion "that God multiplied the corn when it was in the barns." Here we have already the

scheme of the *Études de la Nature* and we need not ask from whom Bernardin held his method of reasoning.

In spite of the touch of folly which spoilt some members of the family, it was an ideal home for the children's happiness. The life there was simple, and humble friends were by no means despised. A servant of the old-fashioned kind, an old woman called Marie, had her place in it, gave her advice and spoilt the children. A Capucine monk, Brother Paul, would bring sugar-plums and delight the whole household with his stories, which bore no trace of morose religious views. Their studies were a little desultory, their recreations delightfully homely. They gardened, played games in the granary, paddled about on the sea-shore, and fought with the street boys, for all the world as though they had no belief in their noble ancestors. Occasionally they got old Marie to do up their hair in numberless starched curl-papers, which stiffened it and filled the good woman with admiration ; they would then put on their best clothes and go to visit Bernardin's godmother, Mme. de Bayard. Those were happy days.

Mme. de Bayard was a countess of ruined fortunes, rather too fond of borrowing, but she had been at the court of Louis XIV. and had known La Grande Mademoiselle, which amounts

to saying that M. de Saint-Pierre thought it due to his aristocratic dreams to get her to “name” one of his children, as they called it in those days. The honour of being her godson devolved upon the future author, who soon learnt to appreciate his good luck. Mme. de Bayard was a handsome old lady, who had preserved in her changed fortunes manners of exquisite courtesy and the airs of a queen. Reduced to all sorts of shifts, and constrained at such times to forget her pride, no sooner had she obtained the necessary money than she raised her head again, and hastened to prepare a fête for those who had obliged her with their purse. Her grace and dignity of manner made them her slaves. They would form a circle round her to listen to her stories of the hero Monsieur le Prince, of Louis XIV., amorous and gay, of the Grande Mademoiselle, grown old, and still weeping over the memory of the ungrateful Lauzun, of the wonders of Versailles, and of the romantic nocturnal revels on the grand canal at Fontainebleau. She told such good stories, had so much wit and cheerful kindliness, that no one ever had the heart to ask for a return of the loans they had made to her.

She brought into play the same fascinations to win the heart of the first comer, were it only a child, so that she appeared to her godson as a

being quite apart, dazzling and adorable. He was not ignorant of the straits she was put to, and it had even happened to him, seeing her in tears, to slip his only silver-piece under her cushion ; but none the less for that did she seem to soar above him in a superior world. Under her faded finery she was to him the personification of supreme elegance, and he was right. She talked as no one else in Havre knew how to talk, and in listening to her he was borne away to a new world peopled with great princes and beautiful princesses who welcomed Mme. de Bayard with distinction. He himself became a great noble and showered riches upon his beloved godmother. He would have been a poor creature not to prefer these beautiful dreams to gifts of any kind, and besides, the old Countess made presents just as she gave her fêtes, at the most unexpected moments. M. de Saint-Pierre respected her, and she had a great influence, and it was always a beneficent one upon little Bernardin's early education.

He was not an easy child to manage. Some one who knew Bernardin de Saint-Pierre very well, and who loved and admired him greatly,¹ said that he united in himself all the good and

¹ Aimé Martin, author of the great biography entitled *Memoirs of the Life and Works of J. H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre*. [1 vol. 8vo. 1820.]

all the bad qualities of his brothers and his sister, who were themselves neither ordinary nor accommodating, with the exception, perhaps, of the youngest of the boys. They were a nervous race, full of ambition, prompt to illusion, and bitterly resenting deception and injustice. "A single thorn," said Bernardin, "gives me more pain than the odour of a hundred roses gives me pleasure." He did not exaggerate, nature had exquisitely adapted him for suffering.

From his earliest years he showed himself to be of an unequal temper, which his father utterly failed to understand. The child was often lost in the clouds, or absorbed in the contemplation of a blade of grass, a flower, or a fly. One day when M. de Saint-Pierre was calling his attention to the beauties of the spires of the Cathedral of Rouen, he cried out in a sort of ecstasy: "Ah, how high they fly!" He had only noticed the swallows wheeling about in the air. His father looked upon him as an idiot, a strange undisciplined creature, and he was very far from guessing at what was taking place in the mind of his little son. The boy had unearthed from a cabinet an enormous folio containing "all the visions of the hermits of the Desert," taken from the *Lives of the Saints*. It became his habitual study, and from it he learnt that God comes to the help of all those

who call upon Him. There could, therefore, be nothing for him to fear from his masters, his parents, old Marie, or in fact from any one. He could abandon himself in peace to his beautiful dreams, and withdraw himself into the ideal world, where his imagination showed him only tenderness, flowers, and sunshine. In case of need he would call God to his aid, and God would surely deliver him.

He did in fact call upon Him, and God came, as He always comes to those who cry to Him in faith. One day, when his mother had punished him unjustly, he prayed to heaven to open the door of his prison, and to make known his innocence. The door remained closed, but a ray of sunlight suddenly pierced the gloom and lighted up the window. The little prisoner fell upon his knees, and burst into tears in a transport of joy. The miracle was accomplished. It is with a ray of sunshine that God has ever opened the prisons of His children.

But the more Providence showed an interest in him, the more ungovernable he became. The child so gentle, so compassionate to animals, became passionate and violent, whenever the shocks of real life unhinged him, so that he was almost beside himself. His father raged, and then it was that the godmother interfered. She, who understood it all, found her godson interest-

ing, and while she comforted him tenderly, she pacified and reassured his parents. To her he owed his recall from exile after some innocent escapade which had terrified his family. To her he owed some of his masters. To her he owed the book which determined the bent of his mind, and the influence of which one can trace everywhere in his works : *Robinson Crusoe*.

Mme. de Bayard had made him a present of it, just at a moment when it was thought necessary to change the current of his thoughts. Before he was twelve he had set his heart upon becoming a Capucine monk, ever since the time when Brother Paul had taken him with him for a tour on foot through Normandy. The journey had been a perpetual enchantment, one long junketing. They stopped at the convents, at the country houses, with well-to-do peasants, and there was nothing but feasting and kindness everywhere. Brother Paul told stories all the way, the weather was fine, the fields were in bloom, and little Bernardin adored nature, whom nobody just then seemed to think much about, with the exception of one other dreamer who had found her "dead in the eyes of men," and who was just then engaged in resuscitating her. But as yet young Saint-Pierre did not even know the name of J. J. Rousseau. He only knew that in the country "the air is pure, the

landscape smiling, walking pleasant, and living easy"; that he was very happy, and never wished to do anything else in the future than to watch the growth of the plants, and listen to the woodland sounds. He made up his mind to take the monk's habit and staff in order to be able to spend the rest of his days wandering about the lanes, and this resolution he announced as soon as he reached home. His father laughed at him, his godmother gave him *Robinson Crusoe*.

This book had a great influence upon his career. It suggested to him the idea of his famous island, where Friday was replaced by a people whom Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, by wise laws and by force of example, had recalled to the "innocence of the golden age." The more he reflected upon it the more the enterprise appeared to him practicable and worthy of a man's powers, so much so that, having served as the sport of his imagination, it became the aim of his existence. After some months, no longer able to curb his impatience, he obtained leave to embark for Martinique in a vessel belonging to one of his uncles. It seemed to him quite impossible that he should not find somewhere on the wide ocean a desert island, of which he would make himself king. Nevertheless, that was what happened, and he returned to Havre greatly dis-

appointed but not discouraged. While awaiting another opportunity he matured his plans, in which the suppression of all schools held a prominent place. Time only served to strengthen him in his design, and we shall find him giving up the best part of his youth to the search for his island. His long journeys had no other object. Being unable to find it, he wished at least to demonstrate to the world what it might have been, and he laboured indefatigably to describe it. One of the results of this fortunate obstinacy is entitled *Paul and Virginia*. We can understand that Bernardin always preserved a feeling of the liveliest gratitude towards his godmother and towards *Robinson Crusoe*.

It was again Mme. de Bayard, who on his return from Martinique interposed to see that he finished his studies. M. de Saint-Pierre did not trouble himself about it, being discouraged by the capricious and senseless method in which his incorrigible son studied. He yielded, however, and sent Bernardin to the Jesuits at Caen, who completed the work begun by the *Lives of the Saints* and *Robinson Crusoe*. They made their pupils read the narratives of their missionaries, and those great voyages to foreign countries, the daring adventures, the sublime sufferings, the martyrs and the miracles finally set on fire the imagination of young Bernardin.

He worked no more, played no more, talked no more, entirely given up to his determined resolution that he also would become a missionary and go for these wonderful voyages, and be a martyr too. The Jesuit father in whom he confided, smiled, but did not discourage him. M. de Saint-Pierre hastened to recall him, and old Marie went to meet him outside the town to say, with tears in her eyes, "Then you mean to become a Jesuit?" That was the first blow to his vocation. The grief of his mother, and the lectures of Brother Paul finally put an end to it, and he thought no more of becoming a martyr.

He had suffered an irreparable loss during his sojourn at Caen. Mme. de Bayard was dead; there was no longer any one to pour peace into that restless and sombre nature. It became more and more true that "all his sensations developed at once into passions," and more than ever he sought a refuge from reality in dreams which his age made dangerous. Eager for solitude, isolated in the midst of his companions, he became absorbed in his visionary projects, and expended upon the phantoms of his imagination the vague emotions that oppressed him.

He sustained another loss equally calamitous to him though for very different reasons. His mother died while he was finishing his studies

at Rouen, and with her disappeared the peaceful joys and sunshine of the home, and her son was astonished to discover that at the first vacation he had no longer any wish to return there, the thought was so new and painful. The following year he went to Paris, with the intention of becoming an engineer, and when he had been there a year, he heard that his father had married again and was no longer to be counted upon to help his sons. One of them was a sailor, the other a soldier. Bernardin found himself alone in the streets of Paris, without money, and almost without friends. His real education was about to commence. He was twenty-three, good-looking, very impressionable, with a delicate, keen imagination, courage, and unstable character.

Almost all his biographers have deplored the use he made of his time up to the age of thirty and after. It is true that in the eyes of prudent people, who approve of a regulated career with promotion at stated intervals, his entrance into the world must appear absurd, even reprehensible. No one could make a worse bungle of his future than he did, his excuse is that it was not intentional. On the contrary, he took great pains to seek appointments, and believed himself to be a model employé. But instinct, stronger than reason, constantly drove him from a line which was not his own. He has

very happily expressed in one of his works¹ the combat which takes place under such circumstances in a highly-endowed mind.

He has just said that among animals, it is upon the innate and permanent instinct of each species that depend their character, their manners and, perhaps, even their expression. "The instincts of animals, which are so varied," he continues, "seem to be distributed in each one of us in the form of secret inward impulses which influence all our lives. Our whole life consists in nothing else but their development, and it is these impulses, when our reason is in conflict with them, which inspire us with immovable constancy, and deliver us up among our fellows to perpetual conflicts with others and with ourselves." Bernardin de Saint-Pierre knew of these struggles with instinct by his own experience. Thanks to them he was so fortunate as to succeed in nothing for twelve years, and to be in the end obliged to abandon himself in despair to those "secret inward impulses," which predestined him to take up the pen. But prudent people have never forgiven him for his inability to settle down, and they have suggested that his conduct was detestable.

He entered the army with the greatest ease,

¹ *Harmonies of Nature*, book v.

owing, as it happened, to a misunderstanding. They were just in the middle of the Seven Years' War, and a great personage to whom Bernardin had applied, mistook him for somebody else and without any further investigation gave him a commission in the Engineers. He went through the campaign of 1760, fell out with his superior officers, and was dismissed. On his return to France, having been to see his father, his stepmother made him feel that he was not wanted, and he returned to Paris as destitute and lonely as it is possible to be. Youth takes these things to heart, and by reason of them bears a grudge against the world and life.

The following year he succeeded in being sent to Malta ; quarrelled with his superiors and with his comrades, and was shelved. From his return from Malta we may date the first of the innumerable memorials he wrote upon all subjects—administrative, political, commercial, military, moral, scientific, educational, philanthropic, and utopian—with which he never ceased from that time to overwhelm the ministers and their offices, his friends and protectors ; in fact, the whole universe, and which made many people look upon him as a plague. One cannot with impunity undertake to be a reformer and to make the happiness of the human race

Bernardin was eager to point out to men in office the mistakes and faults in their administration, and to suggest innovations in the interests of the public good, and he was unaffectedly astonished at their ingratitude. He claimed recompense for his good advice, and received no answer ; he insisted, got angry, and ended by exasperating the most kindly disposed, even his old friend Hennin, Chief Clerk in the Foreign Office, who was obliged to write to him one day : " You deceive yourself sir, the King owes you nothing, because you have not acted by his orders. Your memorials, however useful they may be, do not in the least entitle you to ask favours from the King as a matter of right." Such lessons, only too well deserved, irritated the simple-minded petitioner, who had struck out the forgiveness of injuries from amongst the duties of philanthropy. " I have always needed the courage," he said, " to forgive an insult, do what I will the scar remains, unless the occasion arises for returning good for evil ; for any one under an obligation to me is as sacred in my sight as a benefactor." In the midst of his self-torment he began again, and his affairs went from bad to worse.

Meanwhile he had to live. In the ministry they gave him no hope whatever of being

restored to his rank. He had written to all his relations to ask for help, and had received nothing but refusals. He had given lessons in mathematics and lost his pupils. The baker refused to give him credit any longer, and his landlady threatened to turn him out of doors. There was no other resource left to him but to found his kingdom, which, upon reflection, he had converted into a republic. It was to this that he devoted himself without further delay.

He no longer thought it essential that it should be an island ; any desert would suffice, provided it had a fertile soil and a good climate. He fixed his choice upon the shores of the Sea of Aral, and at once set about his preparations for departure ; which consisted in taking his books to the second-hand bookseller, and his clothes to the old-clothes man, and in borrowing right and left a few crowns. He thus scraped together a few sovereigns, and took the diligence to Brussels, whence he counted on reaching Russia and the Sea of Aral. Why Russia? Why the Sea of Aral? He has given his reasons in a pamphlet, in which he goes back to the Scythian migration, to Odin and Cornelius Nepos, and which explains nothing, unless it is that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre became almost a visionary when his hobby was in question. Here are the reasons which he gives for his

choice: "If there were some place upon earth, under a bright sky, where one could find at one and the same time, honour, riches, and society, all due to the security of possession, that place would soon be filled with inhabitants. *This happy country is to be found on the east coast of the Caspian Sea*; but the Tartars who inhabit it have only made of it a desert." That is all. On the other hand, a note at the bottom of the page shows us where the future legislator had sought his models, reserving to himself the liberty to improve upon them. "The English peopled Pennsylvania with no other invitation than this: *He who shall here plant a tree shall gather the fruits thereof. That is the whole spirit of the law.*" This note was the reply to a famous apostrophe in the *Discours sur l'inégalité* of J. J. Rousseau.

"The first man who, having enclosed a territory, ventured to say *this is mine*, and who found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, miseries and horrors, would he not have spared the human race who should have pulled up the stakes, filled in the ditch, and cried to his fellows, 'Beware of listening to this impostor; *you are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth are for all, and that the earth belongs to no man.*'"

One might point out other disagreements between the *Discours sur l'inégalité* and the pamphlet upon the colony of the Sea of Aral, but they all bear upon questions of detail. Jean Jacques and Bernardin agree at bottom as to the end to aim at and the path to follow. Young Saint-Pierre was already and for ever a disciple of Rousseau. He steeped himself in his philosophy, in anticipation of the day when he was to come to him for lessons in sentiment. Master and pupil both believed that our ills come from society. Nature arranged everything for our happiness, and man was good ; if we are wicked and unhappy the fault is in ourselves, who have provoked the evil by disregarding her laws. One can easily see the consequences of these misanthropical views. As we have been the authors of our own unhappiness and know where we have been mistaken, there is certainly a remedy. It rests with us to overcome most of our sufferings by reforming society, and changing our laws and our morality. Humanity only needs a clear-sighted and courageous guide, who would dare to fling in its face its follies and cruelties—who would bring it back into the right path. Rousseau was this guide in words and on paper Saint-Pierre wished to become the same in deed and in fact. He purposed to put into practice what his century was dreaming

of, and that is why he set out one fine night for a fabulous country. One may maintain that he could have found other and more useful ways of employing his time, but, at least, his way was not commonplace or egotistical.

He travelled as an apostle, solely occupied with his mission, trusting to Providence to bring him with his 150 francs to the feet of Peter III. ; for it was from the Emperor of Russia that he meant to ask help and protection to found his ideal republic, by which should be demonstrated the vast inferiority of monarchies. He never doubted but that the Czar would share his zeal, then why disturb himself about the means of accomplishing his design ? Had he not in old times travelled with brother Paul without money and without thought for the morrow ? Had he come to any harm from it ? What people gave to the mendicant friar for the love of God, they would give to him for the love of humanity. And so it turned out. He arrived in Russia after having spent his last crown at the Hague. His journey had been a perpetual miracle. One lent him money, another lodged him, a third introduced him to others because of his good looks. At Amsterdam they even offered him a situation and a wife, which he did not think it right to accept because of his republic. He felt that he owed a duty to his people.

He landed at St. Petersburg with six francs in his pocket, and the miracle continued. He did not dine every day, thank heaven! or the romance would have had no further interest. But on the eve of dying of hunger he always encountered some generous person who, like his godmother, thought him interesting. He must indeed have been charming, this fine young fellow, full of fire and good faith, starting out from his garret to regenerate the world. So much so indeed that, passed on from one to another, from introduction to introduction, he arrived at last in the train of a general at Moscow, where the court then was, received a commission as sub-lieutenant of Engineers, and replaced the clothes sold to the old-clothes man in Paris by a brilliant uniform. When his new friends saw him in his scarlet coat with black facings, his fawn-coloured waistcoat, his white silk stockings, his beautiful plume, and his glittering sword, they foretold a great fortune for him. One of them called him *cousin*, and offered to present him to the Empress Catherine, whom the Revolution of 1762 had just placed upon the throne. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was transported with joy at this proposal. It was only four months since he had quitted France, and he already neared his goal. Providence evidently watched over his republic.

What remained for him to do appeared mere child's play after what he had accomplished. His pamphlet upon his projected colony was ready—it was the same from which we have quoted some fragments above—and it was not too ill-conceived. In it the author spoke little of the happiness of peoples, and much of the utility to Russia of securing a route to the Indies. The settlement which he proposed to found on the Sea of Aral lost under his pen its doubtful character as a philosophical and humanitarian enterprise, to take on the innocent aspect of a military colony intended to keep the Tartars in check, and to serve as an emporium for merchandise from India. In fact he thought he ought to support it with a speech, which he composed, his Plutarch in his hand, and in which he celebrated “the happiness of kings who establish republics.” But this speech had no unpleasant consequences as we shall see presently.

On the day appointed for the audience he put his pamphlet in his pocket, glanced over his speech, and followed his guide to the palace. They entered a magnificent gallery, full of great nobles glittering with gold and precious stones, who inspired our young enthusiast on the spot with keen repugnance. There they were those vile slaves of monarchy, whose lying tongues

knew no other language than that of flattery! What would be their surprise, what their attitude, on hearing a free man speak boldly of freedom to their sovereign? All at once the door was thrown open with a loud noise, the Empress appeared, every one was silent and remained motionless. The grand master of the ceremonies presented M. de Saint-Pierre, who kissed her hand, and forgot his pamphlet, his speech imitated from Plutarch, his republic, all mankind, and only remembered how to reply gallantly to the great lady who deigned to smile upon his youth and his beautiful blue eyes.

And thus was buried for ever the project of a colony by the Sea of Aral. The author took it the next morning to the favourite of the day, Prince Orloff, and explained its advantages to him without being able to inspire him with the least interest. The Prince indeed seemed relieved when they came to tell him that the Empress was asking for him. "He waited upon her at once in his slippers and dressing-gown, and left M. de Saint-Pierre profoundly distressed and in a mood to write a satire against favourites."¹ He returned, intensely discomfited, to his room at the inn, and took up the education of his manservant while awaiting another opportunity of

¹ Aimé Martin.

founding his ideal republic. His servant was a poor devil of a moujik, who had been kidnapped from his family and made a soldier, and who would sing, with tears in his eyes, sweet and melancholy folk songs. He would put his master's shoes into a bucket of water to clean them, only taking them out when they were wanted. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, having taught him how to brush a coat, he was ready to throw himself at his feet and adore him as a superior being.

Meanwhile his master remained inconsolable at having by his own fault failed to accomplish the happiness of mankind. Russia had lost its attraction, he now only saw in it matter for disgust and anger, and he was angry with himself for having come so far simply to contemplate "slaves" and "victims." His profession bored him. He had addressed to the Russian government several memorials upon the military position and means of defence of Finland, whither his duties as officer of Engineers had called him, and his labours had met with no better fortune there than in France ; nobody paid any attention to it. Anger grew upon him, then bitterness, and he seized upon the first pretext to send in his resignation, and cross the frontier in order to seek elsewhere a "land of liberty" where the antique virtues still lived. A happy inspiration induced him with this idea to follow the road

through Poland where the people were at that time the most oppressed and most miserable in Europe. At sight of Warsaw "he felt in his heart all the virtues of a republican hero."

They did not remain with him long, other and more tender interests were soon to replace them. Warsaw is the scene of the romance of his youth, the adventure that his imagination as time went on turned into a devouring passion, which he ended in believing in himself, and which his biographers have related sometimes with virtuous indignation, accusing him of having lived for more than a year at the expense of a woman, sometimes with the respect due to great sufferings and unmerited misfortunes. Unhappily or happily, some letters of his, published for the first time thirty years ago,¹ show him to have been at once less culpable and less worthy of compassion. These letters are addressed to a friend in Russia, M. Duval, a Genevese merchant established at St. Petersburg. In them Saint-Pierre speaks of his love affairs with the indiscretion of youth and the vanity of a bourgeois anxious to announce to the world that he has made a conquest of a princess. It is amusing to compare this sincere report, confirmed by the *Correspondence* published in his complete works,²

¹ In the appendix to vol. vi. of the *Causeries du lundi*.

² Three vols. in 8vo., edited by Aimé Martin, Paris, 1826, Ladvoat.

with the official story no less sincere, which the hero of the adventure liked to circulate in his old age.

He arrived at Warsaw on the 17th of June, 1764, and was at once received into the houses of several of the nobility. Some weeks passed in festivities, which gave him more just views upon the subject of Polish austerity, and the antique virtues of the country, and he very soon wished to leave. On the 28th of July he wrote to his friend Hennin : " You think my position here agreeable, so it appears from afar, but if you only knew how empty is the world in which I wander ; if you knew how much these dances and grand repasts stupefy without amusing me ! " He then begs M. Hennin to use his interest for him at Versailles, and to obtain for him a mission to Turkey, " the finest country in the world as he has been told."

On the 20th of August there is another letter to M. Hennin, in which he shows that he is more and more impatient to leave Poland : " If nothing keeps me here I shall leave in the beginning of the month of September for . . . Vienna, for I am tired of so much idleness, of which the least evil is that I am growing accustomed to an indolent life." This is certainly not the language of a man desperately in love, whose heart would be broken if one tore him

away from the spot where his divinity breathed. But if we believe the legend, that was, however, the moment in which Bernardin de Saint-Pierre surpassed the passion of Saint-Preux, and lived the life of *The Modern Heloïse*, because it was his fate to realise all that Rousseau had been content to write about, as well in his romances as in his plans of social reform. This is briefly what the legend tells us.

Among the persons who had thrown open their doors to him at Warsaw, was a young princess named Marie Miesnik, remarkable for "her love of virtue." We see that this is exactly the starting-point of *The Modern Heloïse*, a plebeian falls in love with a patrician. "From the first day," says Aimé Martin, "M. de Saint-Pierre felt the double ascendancy of her genius and her beauty, and she became at once the sole thought of his life." On her side the Julia of Poland did not remain insensible. We pass over the emotions which filled and lacerated their souls to the day blessed and fatal, when overtaken by a storm in a lonely forest, they repeated the scene of the groves of Clarens, adding thereto recollections of Dido's grotto. "She gave herself up like Julia, and he was delirious with joy like Saint-Preux," continues Aimé Martin, whose phrase proves how much the resemblance with *The Modern Heloïse* was part

of the tradition. Long intoxication followed these first raptures. *More than a year passed in forgetfulness of the whole world*, but Princess Marie's family began, like Julia's, to be irritated with the insolence of this plebeian who dared to make love to a Miesnik, and the end of it was an order to depart, given by the lady to her lover, like Rousseau again, and which was obeyed with the same passionate lamentations.

That is what time and a little good-will made of the adventure of Warsaw. Now for history.

We have seen just now that nothing bound Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to Warsaw on the 20th of August, 1764. Fifteen days after, the 5th of September, he writes to M. Duval at St. Petersburg: "I must tell you, my dear friend, for I hide nothing from you, that I have formed an attachment here which almost deserves to be called a passion. It has had a good effect in that it has cured me of my humours. Love is therefore a good remedy to recommend to you, above all, love gratified. I have had such a pleasant experience of it, that I impart it to you as an infallible secret, which will be as useful to you as to me. My hypochondria is almost cured.

"I might flatter my self-love by naming to you the object of my passion, but you know I

have more delicacy than vanity. I have then found all that could attach me, graces without number, wit enough, and reciprocal affection.

“Another time you shall know more, but be persuaded that with me love does no wrong to friendship.”

We are a long way from the genius, the intoxicating beauty, the unheard-of delights. A young man, full of worries, finds distraction and amuses himself with a lovely young lady who has “enough wit,” and who is not unkind to him. He is really in love with her, but in a quite reasonable manner, for he writes the same day to Hennin, then at Vienna, that the approach of the bad weather obliges him to make up his mind, and that he will delay no longer in leaving Warsaw. In fact, on the 26th of September he announces his departure to Duval in a letter of which I give the essential passages :

“My very worthy friend, the offers which you make me, the interest which you take in me, your tender attentions, are in my heart subjects of everlasting attachment. I do not know what Heaven has in store for me, but it has never before poured so much joy into my soul. It was something to have given me a friend, love has left me nothing further to desire ; it is into your bosom that I pour out my happiness.

“I will not give you the name of the person

who after you holds the first place in my heart. Her rank is high above mine, her beauty not extraordinary, but her graces and her wit merit all the homage which I was not able to deny to them. I have received help from her which prevents me from actually accepting your offers. It was pressed upon me so tenderly, that I could not help giving it the preference. I beg you to forgive me for it. I have accepted from her about the value of the sum you offered me. . . .

. . . "I am spending part of the night in writing to you. I start to-morrow, and my trunks are not yet ready."

One is sorry to learn that he had accepted money from his Princess. His excuse, if there were one for that sort of thing, will be found in the letter of *The Modern Heloïse*, where Julia persuades her lover, by means of eloquent invective, to receive money for a journey. "So I offend your honour for which I would a thousand times give my life? I offend thine honour, ungrateful one! who hast found me ready to abandon mine to thee. Where is then this honour which I offend, tell me, grovelling heart, soul without delicacy! Ah! how contemptible art thou if thou hast but one honour of which Julia does not know," &c. Saint-Preux had submitted to this torrent. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre imi-

tated his model in this also. See where literary loves lead one.

He left Warsaw on the 27th of September, after remaining there three months and some days. Three months in which to meet, to love, to part, was really the least one could allow. Certainly there was an epilogue, but how transitory!

He had gone to rejoin M. Hennin at Vienna, where he received a letter from the Princess M., who had thought proper to depict for him the sufferings of absence. With his ordinary ingenuousness he took her at her word, got into a carriage, returned to Warsaw unannounced, arrived in the midst of a reception, was received with fiery glances and insulting words, would take no denial, and after the departure of the guests, wrested his pardon then and there. The next day when he awoke, they gave him the following note:

“Your passion is a fury which I can no longer endure. Return to your senses. Think of your position and your duties. I am just starting, I am going to rejoin my mother in the Palatinate of X. I shall not return until I hear that you are no longer here, and you will receive no letters from me until such time as I can address them to you to France. Marie M—.”

She had in fact departed. Bernardin de

Saint-Pierre felt outraged, and never saw her again.

He returned to his vagrant excursions through Dresden, Berlin, and Paris, to Havre, where he found only his old nurse. His father was dead, his sister in a convent, his brothers far away. "Ah! sir," said the good woman, upsetting her spinning-wheel in her emotion, "the times are indeed changed. There is no one here to receive you but me!" She invited him to dine in her bare lodging, beside her bed of straw, and served up an omelet and a pitcher of cider. Then she opened her trunk, and took out a chipped glass, which she placed gently beside her guest, saying, "It was your mother's." They wept together, and then they talked over the news of the country, of Brother Paul, who was dead, of those who had left the town, of those who had made their fortunes. They spoke also of Russia, of what they drank there, and of the price they paid for bread. Above all things they talked of the happy times when old Marie used to do up the children's hair in starched curl-papers, admired their nonsense, and with her own money bought the class books lost by Bernardin, so as to save him from a scolding. They wept together again, kissed each other, and the young adventurer set out once more, less discontented with humanity than usual. He was also less satisfied

with himself, after the lesson of resignation which he had received from this poor old woman, who lived upon three pence a day, and praised God for taking care of her.

Returned to Paris he again overwhelmed the ministers of the king, Louis XV., with memorials which no one wanted, with complaints and petitions. He continued to invent schemes on all sorts of subjects, and to cover scraps of paper with a thousand scattered ideas. M. Hennin, clearly discerning where his talent lay, persuaded him to write his travels, but the time was not yet come, and the fragments of this date which have been preserved to us, contain nothing but information upon political, commercial, and agricultural subjects. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre himself felt that it was too soon. Announcing one day to Hennin that he had conceived a new idea about the movement of the earth, he added :

“You can see by that, that I grapple with everything, and that I leave floating here and there threads, like the spider, until I can weave my web. . . .

“Give me time to lick my cub. Time, which ripens my intellect, will make the fruits thereof more worthy of you” (Letter of the 9th of July, 1767).

He had a sort of instinct that all those Northern scenes which he had passed through

were of no use to him. He tried to find employment in the countries of the sun—in the East or West Indies—without knowing himself why there more than anywhere else. It was the exotic that sought him, and it came to him in a most unexpected manner in the autumn of 1767.

It is hardly necessary to say that whoever knew him, knew his project of an ideal republic. To whom had he not mentioned it? He had never ceased to believe in it—to be sure that people would come to it, one day or another; but his ill-luck at Moscow had made his belief less confident and less active. He resigned himself to await until Humanity should call upon him to help it. Great then was his joy when one of his patrons announced to him in confidence one fine day that the French government, converted to his ideas, was going to send him to Madagascar, under the command of a certain person from the Isle of France, to found the colony of his dreams, and to attach the island to France by “the power of wisdom” and “the example of happiness.” There was certainly some surprise mixed with his delight, but not sufficient to make him ask himself whether his protector wished merely to get rid of him, or for what reason an expedition entrusted solely to himself had for leader a planter from

the Isle of France. He only thought of his preparations for his great enterprise.

His first care was to re-read Plato and Plutarch, and to determine the legislation of his colony. He remained faithful to his first idea of a state entirely free, under the control completely absolute, arbitrary, and irresponsible, of M. de Saint-Pierre. Some one, of course, would have to compel the people to be "subject only to virtue." That was the system put in force later by the Jacobins.

He next drew out the plan of his chief town, and employed the small inheritance which came to him from his father, in buying scientific instruments and works upon politics, the navy, and natural history. The expedition was to embark at Lorient. He hastened to rejoin it, and was at first disappointed with its composition, for instead of artisans and agriculturalists, the Commander-in-chief had collected secretaries, valets, cooks, and a small troupe of comedians of both sexes. However, Saint-Pierre took heart at once on learning that the Commander-in-chief had amongst his luggage all the volumes that had yet appeared of the *Encyclopædia*. He was, therefore, in spite of all, "a true philosopher," and things were pretty evenly balanced. The *Encyclopædia* took the place of the artisans, and made the

actresses pass muster. Take note that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre always reproached his contemporaries, especially the encyclopædists, with being mere visionaries, destitute of practical sense. He flattered himself that he was the practical man in this world of Utopians, but at the same time he looked upon their work as a sort of supernatural book. Such is the power of opinion.

The expedition set sail under the most promising auspices, but once on the open sea, the Commander wished to bring Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to a more reasonable view of the situation, and explained to him that he had never had any other design than to sell his subjects. I leave to the imagination the effects of this thunderclap. They were taking him to join them in the slave trade of the people of Madagascar! The horror of such a thought increasing the shame of having been duped voyage, companions, projects for the future, and the very name of Madagascar, all became odious to him on the spot. His ship touched at the Isle of France. He hastened to disembark, took a situation as engineer, and left his Commander to go on alone to Madagascar, where, it may be remarked by the way, the expedition perished of fever. For himself, discouraged and justly embittered, he lived in a lonely little cottage

from which he could see nothing but the sea, arid plains, and forests. Seated in front of his one window, he spent long hours in letting his gaze wander aimlessly. Or, perhaps, a melancholy pedestrian, he wandered about on the shore, in the mountains, in the depths of those tropical forests which we picture to ourselves as so beautiful, and which he found so sad, because nothing there recalled to him the pleasant scenes of his own country, and because he saw the Isle of France under such gloomy auspices.

“There is not a flower,” he wrote, “in the meadows, which, moreover, are strewn with stones, and full of a herb as tough as hemp; no flowering plant with a pleasant scent. Among all the shrubs not one worth our hawthorn. The wild vines have none of the charms of honeysuckle or ground ivy. There are no violets in the woods, and as to the trees, they are great trunks, grey and bare, with a small tuft of leaves of a dull green. These wild regions have never rejoiced in the songs of birds or the loves of any peaceable animal. Sometimes one’s ear is offended by the shrieks of the parroquet, or the strident cries of the mischievous monkey.”¹

His melancholy lasted throughout his stay

¹ *Voyage to the Isle of France.*

and was good for him : " One enjoys agreeable things," he said afterwards, " and the sad ones make one reflect." That was the lesson which the Isle of France had given to him. He had been there much thrown back upon himself, and he had gained at last a glimpse of the right road. Instead of continuing to cram his notes of travel with technical details, good at most to adorn his memorials to the ministers, he had set himself to note down what he observed from his window, or during his walks. He made a note of the lines and forms of the landscape, of its general appearance, the formation of the ground, the structure of the rocks, the outlines of the trees and plants. He observed their colours, their most subtle shades, their variations according to the weather or time of day, their smallest details, such as the red fissure on a grey stone, or the white underside of a green leaf. He notes the sounds of his solitude, the particular sound of the wind on a certain day in a certain place, the murmur belonging to each kind of tree, the rhythm of a flight of birds, the imperceptible rustling of a leaf moved by an insect. He noted the movements of inanimate nature, the waving of the grass, the parts of a circle described by the force of the wind in the tree tops, the swaying of a leaf upon which a bird had perched itself, the flowing of the

streams, the tossing of the sea, the pace of the clouds.¹

Sometimes he drew, and his sketches were only another form of notes. During the crossing, while full of acute sorrow, he had drawn numberless clouds. He studied their forms, their colour, their foreground and background, their combinations, by themselves or with the sea, the play of light upon them, with the attention and conscientiousness of a painter of to-day, exacting in the matter of truth.

This rage for taking notes seems a simple thing to us now ; it is the method of to-day, but it was unique and unheard of in 1769. No one, in France at least, had bethought themselves of these descriptions, for which one must have materials. Moreover, no one was then in a position to note the details of a landscape, for the simple reason that no one was capable of seeing them, not even Rousseau. Not that he had not the same keen perception for nature that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had, but it struck him in a somewhat different way, as we shall see later. Besides, the *Confessions* and the *Reveries* did not appear till after his death, and could not have had any influence whatever on the birth at

¹ The papers of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre are in the possession of the family Aimé Martin. M. Aimé Martin had beside him, when he was writing Bernardin's biography, the numerous notes taken by the latter from nature.

the Isle of France in 1769 of picturesque literature.

It was a birth as yet obscure and seemingly uncertain. This young engineer, who sketched sunsets instead of making plans, did not know very well what he would do with his "observations." He felt that they would not be wasted, and that they were not like other stories of travel, but the definite initiation into his own sphere was still wanting.

It concerns us little what Bernardin de Saint-Pierre did at the Isle of France, outside his dreamings, or whether he was right or wrong in his quarrels, his disagreements, and his lamentations. It suffices for us that he returned to Paris in the month of June, 1771, his portfolio full of scraps of paper, his trunks full of shells, plants, insects and birds, and what was of more value, his head full of pictures. He was as poor as when he set out, and still more unsociable, but he was ripe for his task. "He had seen, he had felt, he had suffered, he had heaped up emotions and colours, he had made himself different to other men. To the vulgar crowd he had been an adventurer, but he had passed through the school which develops painters, poets, and men of talent. That is what he had gained by his long travels."¹ It is a great advantage when

¹ Villemain, *The Literature of the Eighteenth Century*.

one is oneself an exceptional being, to have had a youth which was not like that of everybody else. An ordinary man would have run a great chance of coming out diminished in energy, and on the wrong road, from those dangerous years of apprenticeship which led the author of *Paul and Virginia* to be himself. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre came through them without too many mishaps. His travels only made him a little more original, and more misanthropic than he was in the beginning.

CHAPTER II.

PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY—VOYAGE TO THE ISLE OF
FRANCE—ACQUAINTANCE WITH J. J. ROUSSEAU
—THE CRISIS.

HE felt about for some time longer before finally taking up the pen. In vain his friend Hennin urged him: "Above all, do not keep saying as you have done hitherto, 'I will write, I will publish,' write, publish, and leave it to your friends to make your work a success." Bernardin de Saint-Pierre hesitated: "I am occupying myself," he replied, "in putting in order the journal of my travels, not that I wish to become an author, that is too distasteful a career and leads to nothing, but I imitate those who learn to draw, in order to adorn their rooms" (Letter of the 29th of December, 1771). He speaks to him in the same letter of getting the Government to give him a mission to the Indies, so that he may be able to regale the ministers with a few more memorials on politics or strategy.

He hesitated because he did not know how to set to work. He thought he saw a manner of

describing nature for which he knew of no models ; and instead of trusting to himself, he appealed to his writers, who could do nothing for him. In the *Harmonies de la Nature*, his last great work, into which he put all his fragments, there is a rhetorical lecture upon the rules of landscape painting, which bears witness to the care with which he had analysed the methods of Virgil. In it Saint-Pierre explains to some imaginary pupils the means employed by the poet to obtain the desired effect : “ When Virgil tells us, ‘ The ash-tree is very beautiful *in the woods*, the poplar *on the banks of the rivers*,’ he puts the tree in the singular and the site in the plural, *in order to enlarge his horizon*. If he had put the vegetation in the plural, and the sites in the singular, they would not have had the same scope. He would have contracted his different scenes if he had said : ‘ The ash-trees are very beautiful *in a wood* ; the poplars *on the bank of a river*.’ The lines of the picture once fixed, Virgil throws the flash of light upon his landscape, and it appears either sad or smiling. He succeeds in enlivening it with bees, swans, birds and flocks ; or in saddening it by painting it desolate. A landscape is always melancholy when it includes nothing but the primitive forces of nature.”

It is a subtle piece of observation, but the

feeling for nature which was awakening in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and for which he was striving to find expression, was more complicated than that of Virgil. Neither the *Eclogues* nor the *Georgics* taught him anything about what were to be the great novelties of descriptive literature. The ancients did not feel this need for precise and picturesque detail, which has enabled us to take the portrait of a corner of country as we do that of a person, with the same minutiae, and the same care about the resemblance. On the other hand, they had little of the intuition for that mysterious correspondence between the scene and the spectator, of that reciprocal action of nature upon our feelings, and of our feelings upon the manner in which we look upon nature that in our day gives so personal an emphasis to literary pictures of scenery, and can lend a tragedy to the description of a bit of meadow. The only one of the Greek or Latin writers, who has described the relations of our souls with the world around us, has done it magnificently ; but Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had not read him. He was a Father of the Church of the fourth century, Saint Gregory of Nazianzen, some of whose pages make us think of Chateaubriand.

“Yesterday, tortured by my regrets, I seated myself under the shade of a thick wood, eating

my heart in solitude ; for in trouble this silent communing with one's soul is a consolation that I love. From the tree-tops where the breeze murmured, and the birds were singing, gladdened by the sunlight, there fell a soft influence of sleep. The grasshoppers hidden in the grass echoed through the wood, a clear stream softly gliding through its cool glades bathed my feet ; as for me, I remained pre-occupied with my grief, and had no care for these things ; for when the soul is overwhelmed with sorrow it cannot yield itself up to pleasure. In the tumult of my troubled heart, I spoke aloud the thoughts which were contending within me : 'What have I been ? What am I ? What shall I become ? I know not. One wiser than I knows no better. Lost in clouds I wander to and fro ; having nothing, not even the dream of what I desire.'"¹

One might urge that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had not read the poets of the sixteenth century any more than the Fathers of the Church. It was not the fashion of his day, and he was not the sort of man to go and explore the libraries ; he was too much occupied in making discoveries in the fields. Like almost all his contemporaries, he jumped from antiquity to the seventeenth century with only Montaigne

¹ *Poems.* Translated by Villemain.

in the interval. After Homer, Virgil, the Gospel, and Plutarch, his intellectual sustenance had been Racine, La Fontaine, Fénelon, and at last coming to his contemporaries, Jean Jacques Rousseau. In vain he questioned them upon the idea which pursued him ; not one of them gave him a satisfactory answer. Racine, who they say was enchanted with the valley of Port Royal, had had no room in his tragedies for word pictures. La Fontaine had more the feeling for the country than for nature. Fénelon saw the woods and the fields from the point of view of the ancients. We have purposely not mentioned Buffon ; Bernardin did not understand or appreciate him.

There remained Rousseau, who loved the beauty of the universe with all his passionate heart ; but the fine descriptions of Rousseau appear in his posthumous works — in the *Confessions* and the *Reveries* which were published, it is well to insist upon this, nine years after the *Voyage to the Isle of France*. The celebrated landscapes in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which Saint-Pierre had certainly studied, have about them something conventional, which makes them appear cold. Call to mind Saint-Preux in the mountains of Valais :

“ Here immense rocks hung in ruins above my head ; there high and thundering cascades

drenched me with their thick mist ; again, an eternal torrent would open beside me an abyss, of which my eyes did not dare to sound the depths. Sometimes I lost myself in the obscurity of a thick wood. Sometimes on emerging from a ravine my eyes would suddenly be rejoiced by a pleasant plain. An astonishing admixture of wilderness and cultivation shows everywhere the hand of men, where one would have thought that they had never penetrated: beside a cavern you found houses, dried vine branches, where one only sought brambles, vines growing upon landslips, excellent fruit upon rocks, and fields in the midst of precipices."

In this bit, almost all the adjectives are abstract. The torrent is *eternal*, the meadow *agreeable*, the fruits *excellent*. It is still in the style of Poussin, and nothing in it foretells the pictures in the manner of Corot and Théodore Rousseau, which Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was soon to give to us. Let us say at once, in order to establish the claim of the author of *Paul and Virginia* to the character of an innovator and pioneer, that the posthumous works of Jean Jacques only give us his own impressions of a picture which he suggests rather than shows to us. The immortal summer night of the *Confessions*, on the road near Lyons, or the walk to Ménilmontant of the *Reveries* after

the vintage and through the leafless country, leave in the memory recollections of sensations rather than pictures. One recalls a breeze of voluptuous warmth, a soft light of autumn ; but the physiognomy of the country escapes us. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre will be the first to paint it for us accurately. Just because he is much less great than his glorious predecessor, we must give him his due, and insist upon his originality.

Thus thrown upon his own resources, and finding by great good fortune no one to imitate, he decided to take up the pen, and wrote, as well as he could, and with many erasures, his *Voyage to the Isle of France*. He had succeeded in sufficiently clearing up his ideas to know very well what he wanted to do. He had two objects in view : in the first place he wished to awaken a love of nature amongst the public. "By dint of familiarising ourselves with the arts," he says in *The Voyage*, "Nature becomes alien to us ; we are even so artificial that we call natural objects curiosities." He was shocked that the multitude who became enamoured of the works of men could pass by the works of God without seeing them, and he boasted for his part that he preferred a vine-stock to a column . . . the flight of a gnat to the colonnade of the Louvre." Moreover, he

could not understand how one could separate man from his surroundings, from the air which he breathed, the soil which he trod upon, the plants and animals which were about him. "A landscape," he says in his preface, "is the background of the picture of human life."

The second object of his work was in his eyes still more important than the first. The awakening of a love of nature amongst men was not to be a simple artistic pleasure. Saint-Pierre designed to make use of it to teach these same multitudes to seek evidences of the Divinity elsewhere than in books. He wished to restore to the France of the philosophers the sense of the presence of God in the universe, and the best way to do it seemed to him to be to draw attention towards the marvels of creation. No argument in his eyes was worth a day passed in the fields in looking at what was about him and at his feet. "Nature," he wrote, "presents such ingenious harmonies, such benevolent designs ; mute scenes so expressive and little noticed, that if one could present even a feeble picture of them to the most thoughtless man, he would be forced to exclaim, 'There is some moving spirit in all this.'" In another place he apologises himself for having written about plants and animals without being a naturalist, and he adds : "Natural history not being con-

fined to the libraries it seemed to me that it was a book wherein all the world might read. I have thought I could perceive the tangible evidence of the existence of a Providence, and I have spoken of it, not as a system which amuses my mind but as a feeling of which my heart is full."

We notice in the two last lines the avowal, as yet timid and obscure, of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's favourite maxim, the key to all his schemes philosophical, scientific, political, or educational. He always strove, and more and more openly as he gained reputation and authority, to persuade the world that feeling is ever a better guide than reason in all questions, and that it gives us greater certainty. He himself gave an example in applying it to everything, and in particular to the truths of religion. We should say truthfully, that he was sufficiently of his day, sufficiently imbued with the spirit of the encyclopædists to believe himself already conquered if he appealed to reason in favour of God. He thought it safest to address himself to the feelings of the reader rather than to his intelligence, in order to reconcile him with a personage so little in favour.

This fine programme was unhappily very indifferently realised in the *Voyage to the Isle of France*. Bernardin had first and foremost an

immense difficulty to contend against in the absence of a picturesque vocabulary. "The art of depicting nature is so new," he said in the course of his narrative, "that its terminology is yet uninvented. Try to describe a mountain so that it shall be recognisable: when you have spoken of the foundation, of the sides, and the summit, you will have said everything. But what variety is there in those forms bulging, rounded, extended, here flattened, there hollowed, &c. ! You can find nothing but paraphrases. There is the same difficulty with the plains and valleys. . . . It is not astonishing, then, that travellers give such poor accounts of natural objects. If they describe a country to you, you will see in it towns, rivers, mountains ; but their descriptions are as barren as a geographical map : Hindostan resembles Europe ; *there is no character in it.*"

There are, in fact, accounts of travels of the eighteenth century in which one might confound a landscape in the East, with one in Touraine. Not only they did not see so much difference as we do : they wanted words to give to each its own idiosyncrasy. To Bernardin de Saint-Pierre is due the honour of having begun the work of enriching the language, which was one of the glories of the Romantic School.

Having to some extent overcome this first

difficulty, Bernardin encountered a second before which he succumbed. That was his inexperience, and the timidity of a novice who dares not let himself go. His narrative is dry and often tiresome. There are here and there fine descriptions, written with a certain breadth and musical expression, but the whole only creates an interest because it is an attempt to achieve something new. The picture of the port at Lorient is one of the best things in it. It is at the beginning and it makes one hope for better things.

“A strong wind was blowing. We had crossed through the town without meeting any one. From the walls of the citadel I could see the inky horizon, the island of Grois covered with mist, the open sea tossing restlessly ; in the distance great ships close-reefed, and poor sailing luggers in the trough of the sea ; upon the shore troops of women benumbed with cold and fear ; a sentinel on the top of a bastion surprised at the hardihood of those poor men who fish with the gulls in the midst of the tempest.”

There is grandeur and emphasis in this passage. It has character, to use Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's expression ; the sea which he paints for us is the real ocean, and the ocean as seen from the coast of France on a stormy day.

He is no less happy in describing familiar things, witness his description of the fish market. "We returned well buttoned up, very wet, and holding on our hats with our hands. In passing through Lorient we saw the whole market-place covered with fish ; skates white and dark-coloured, others bristling with spines ; dog-fish, monstrous conger-eels writhing upon the ground ; large baskets full of crabs and lobsters ; heaps of oysters, mussels, and scallops ; cod, soles, turbot, in fine a miraculous draught like that of the apostles."

The tempest at sea in the Mozambique Channel is perhaps the best page in the book. In order to enjoy it thoroughly, we must turn first to the classical tempests before Saint-Pierre's time, which are still more featureless, more destitute of character, than the landscapes. The following example is taken from *Telemachus*: "While they thus forgot the dangers of the sea a sudden tempest agitated the heavens and the sea. The unchained winds roared with fury in the sails ; dark waves beat against the sides of the vessel, which groaned under their blows. Now we rose on to the summits of the swollen waves ; now the sea seemed to disappear from under the ship and to plunge us into the abyss." When one has read one of these accounts one has read them all. The same terms, few in

number, serve to fashion indefinitely the same images of groaning vessels which roaring winds precipitate into the abyss, and it is not even necessary to have seen the sea in order to acquit oneself quite respectably: it is enough if one consults the proper authors. Not a word of the description which we have been reading belonged really to Fénélon. He took it in its entirety from Virgil and Ovid:

. . . stridens aquilone procella.

Velum adversa ferit.

(Virgil. *The Eniad.*)

Sœpe dat ingentem fluctu latus icta fragorem.

(Ovid. *The Metamorphosis.*)

Hi summo in fluctu pendent; his unda dehiscens
Terram inter fluctus aperit.

(Virgil. *The Eniad.*)

Now compare with this literary tempest the realistic description of Saint-Pierre, taken from hour to hour, minute to minute, and put down in a note-book as the rolling of the vessel permitted.

“On the 23rd (June, 1768), at half-past twelve, a tremendously heavy sea stove in four windows out of five in the large saloon, although their shutters were fastened with crossbars. The vessel made a backward movement as if she was going down by the stern. Hearing the noise, I opened the door of my cabin, which in

a moment was full of water and floating furniture. The water escaped by the door of the grand saloon as though through the sluices of a mill; upwards of twenty hogsheads had come in. The carpenters were called, a light was brought, and they hastened to nail up other port-holes. We were then flying along under the foresail; the wind and the sea were terrible. . . .

“As the rolling of the ship prevented me from sleeping, I had thrown myself into my berth in my boots and dressing-gown; my dog seemed to be seized with extraordinary fear. While I was amusing myself trying to calm him, I saw a flash of lightning through the dim light of my port-hole, and heard the noise of thunder. It might have been about half-past three. An instant later a second peal of thunder burst overhead, and my dog began to tremble and howl. Then came a third flash of lightning, followed almost immediately by a third peal of thunder, and I heard some one in the fore-castle cry that a ship was in danger; in fact, the noise was like the roar of a cannon discharged close to us; there was no reverberation. As I smelt a strong odour of sulphur, I went up on deck, where at first I felt it intensely cold. A great silence reigned there, and the night was so dark that I could see nothing. However, I made out

dimly some one near me. I asked him what had happened ; he replied, ‘ They have just carried the officer of the watch to his cabin ; he has fainted, as has also the pilot. The lightning struck our vessel, and our mainmast is split.’ I could in fact distinguish the yard of the topsail, which had fallen upon the cross-trees of the main-top. Above it there was neither mast nor rigging, and the whole of the crew had retired into the chart-room. They made a round of the decks, and found that the lightning had descended the whole length of the mast. A woman who had just been confined had seen a globe of fire at the foot of her berth ; nevertheless, they found no trace of fire. Everybody awaited with impatience the end of the night.

“At daybreak I went up on deck again. In the sky were some clouds, white and copper-coloured. The wind blew from the west, where the horizon appeared of a ruddy silver, as though the sun were going to rise there ; the east was entirely black. The sea rose in huge waves, resembling jagged mountain ranges, formed of tier upon tier of hills. On their summit were great jets of spray tinted with the colours of the rainbow. They rose to such a height that from the quarter-deck they seemed to us higher than the topmast. The wind made so much noise in the rigging it was impossible for us to

hear one another. We were scudding before the wind under the foresail. A stump of the topmast hung from the end of the mainmast, which was split in eight places down to the level of the deck. Five of the iron bands with which it was bound had been melted away. . . .’

Here are now some extracts from one of Pierre Loti’s storms. We shall thus be able to estimate the progress which descriptive literature has made in the last two centuries.

“The waves, still small, began to chase one another and melt together ; they were at first marbled with white foam, which on their crests broke into spray. Then with a kind of hiss there rose a smoke : you would have said the water was boiling or burning, and the strident clamour of it all increased from moment to moment. . . . The great bank of clouds which had gathered on the western horizon in the shape of an island, was beginning to break up from the top and the fragments were scudding over the sky. It seemed to be inexhaustible ; the wind drew it out, elongated it, and stretched it, bringing out of it dark curtains, which it spread over the clear yellow sky, now become livid, cold, and dark.

“And all the while it grew stronger and stronger, this mighty breath which made all things to tremble.

“The ship, the *Marie*, prepares for bad weather, and begins to fly to leeward.

“Overhead it had become quite dark, a dead vault that seemed as if it would crush you—with a few spots of a yet blacker blackness, which were spread over it in formless patches. It seemed almost like a motionless dome, and you had to look closely to see that it was in the full whirl of movement. Great sheets of grey cloud hurrying by and unceasingly replaced by others, rose from the bottom of the horizon, like gloomy curtains unrolling from an endless coil.

“The *Marie* fled faster and faster before the storm, and the storm fled after her as if from some mysterious terror. Everything—the wind, the sea, the ship, the clouds—was seized with the same panic of flight and speed towards the same point. And all this passion of movement grew greater, under an ever-darkening sky, in the midst of ever-increasing din.

“From everything arose a Titanic clamour, like the prelude of an apocalypse foreboding the horror of a world’s catastrophe. Amidst it you could distinguish thousands of voices ; those above were shrill or deep, and seemed far off because they were so mighty ; that was the wind, the great soul of this confusion, the invisible power that dominated it all. It filled one with fear, but there were other sounds

nearer, more material, more ominous of destruction, which came from the writhen water, that hissed as it were upon embers.”¹

After the pages which we have just read there is nothing more in the way of progress possible. The only thing to be done would be to return to the great simplicity of Homer, Lucretius, and Virgil, to obtain the same emotions in two or three lines.

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's style is bald beside that of Pierre Loti ; it requires an effort to return to it. The arrival at Port Louis of the ship, disabled, and filled with scurvy-smitten people, is, however, striking in its simplicity. “Just imagine this riven mainmast, this ship with her flag of distress, firing guns every minute ; a few sailors, looking like spectres, seated on the deck ; the open hatches, whence rose a poisonous vapour ; the 'tween-decks full of dying people, the deck covered with invalids exposed to the heat of the sun, and who died whilst speaking to one. I shall never forget a young man of eighteen, to whom the evening before I had promised a little lemonade. I sought him on the deck amongst the others ; they pointed him out to me lying on a plank ; he had died during the night.”

The passages in which the thought and the

¹ Pecheur d'Islande.

expression are thus wedded are unfortunately rare in the *Voyage to the Isle of France*. In general, the writer does not yet understand how to make the best use of his sketches and notes ; and he did not hesitate later on to go over his first sketches and develop them. This makes it very convenient for following his progress in the difficult art which he was creating. One can judge of it in his account of a sunset at sea in the tropics, which he re-wrote for the *Études de la Nature*. Here is the sketch as it appeared in the *Voyage to the Isle of France* :

“ One evening the clouds gathered towards the west in the form of a vast net, resembling in texture white silk. As the sun passed behind it each strand appeared in relief surrounded with a circle of gold. The gold gradually dissolved into flame-colour and crimson tints, and low on the horizon appeared pale tones of purple, green, and azure.

“ Often in the sky there are formed landscapes of singular variety, where you can find the most fantastic shapes, promontories, steep declivities, towers, and hamlets, over which the light throws in succession all sorts of prismatic colours.”

This is but a summary account of the scene, a sort of table of contents of the state of the sky on a certain evening. The second description

is almost too excessive, and contains too much imagery and too many colours.

“ Sometimes the winds roll up the clouds as though they were strands of silk ; then they drive them to the west, crossing them over one another like the withies of a basket. They throw to one side of this network the clouds which they have not made use of, and which are not few in number. They roll them up into immense white masses like snow, and pile them up one upon another, like the Cordilleras of Peru, giving to them the forms of mountains, caverns, and rocks. Then towards the evening they calm down a bit, as if they feared to disarrange their work. When the sun goes down behind this magnificent tracery, one sees through all the interstices a multitude of luminous rays, which, lighting up two sides of each mesh, seem to illuminate it with a golden aureole, while the other two sides, which are in shadow, are tipped with superb tones of pale red. Four or five rays of light rise from the setting sun right to the zenith, and edge with a golden fringe the vaguely-defined outline of this celestial barrier, throwing their glowing reflections upon the pyramids of the airy mountains beside them, which appear gold and vermillion. It is then that you see in the midst of their numerous ridges a multitude of valleys which extend into

space, and are marked at their entrance by some shade of flesh-colour or pink. The celestial valleys present in their diverse contours inimitable tones of white, which melt away into space as far as the eye can reach, or shadows which lengthen out towards the other clouds without losing themselves in them. You see here and there, emerging from the cavernous sides of these cloud mountains, streams of light which are thrown in bars of gold and silver upon rocks of coral. Here are gloomy rocks pierced through so that you can see the pure blue of heaven through their apertures ; there appear long stretches of golden sands, which extend into the wondrous depths of the crimson, scarlet, and emerald-green sky. By degrees the luminous clouds become faint-coloured, and the faint-coloured fade into shadow. Their forms are as varied as their tints, and in turn they appear as islands, hamlets, hills planted with palms, great bridges across rivers, countries of gold, of amethysts, of rubies, or rather there is nothing of all this but just colours and heavenly forms, which no brush can paint, and no tongue express."

The landscapes of the *Voyage to the Isle of France* are for the most part very sad. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre found the Isle of France ugly and gloomy, perhaps because he had had

nothing but trouble there. Throughout his narrative he tries to convey the impression of a barren, cheerless country, in some places covered with scorched grass, which makes it look "black as a coal-pit," in others paved with stones of an iron-grey colour, which form an unpleasant surface to a rugged country. Plants, which he generally loves so much, do not appeal to him there. Many are thorny, others mal-odorous, and the flowers are not pretty. He does not like the trees, they have not the superb bearing of French oaks and chestnuts, and their stiff leaves of dark green give an effect of sadness to the verdure. Here and there, however, one comes across delightful spots where the great woods are enlivened by babbling brooks, but these solitudes, the refuge for runaway slaves, are the theatre of hideous man-hunts. You see this unhappy quarry killed or wounded with gun-shots, and hear the crack of the whip in the air like pistol-shots, and cries which rend one's heart, "Spare me, master, have pity!" To the heart thus oppressed the beauties of the landscape disappear, and one only sees in it "an abominable country." Abominable country, abominable abode, abominable inhabitants, for the most part—that is, the Isle of France of the *Voyage*—little in all conscience to impress our minds with the idea of a beneficent Providence,

careful of our needs. The author saw this, for he abandoned this part of his programme and kept to picturesque effects, producing in the end a meagre book, only a rough sketch of what he had in his head.

The volume appeared in the first months of the year 1773, and in the article of the *Correspondence littéraire*, by Grunin, in the end of February. The letter which accompanied the copy destined for Hennin is dated March 17 : "Here at last, sir and dear friend, is some of the fruit of my garden . . . Send me your opinion of my *Voyage*." Saint-Pierre added in another letter of the 1st of June : "My book has had a great literary success ; but that is almost the only profit which I have obtained from it."

Did he really have a great success ? It is doubtful as regards the masculine public. Hennin kept an obstinate silence on the subject in his letters, to the great disgust of the author, who had the bad taste to persist, and who wrote to him two years later : "Why do you not talk to me of my *Voyage* ?" Duval, his friend at St. Petersburg, insinuated among his compliments a few words on the passages which suggested 'an imitation of Rousseau, of Voltaire, or of Montesquieu.' Grunin did not understand it at all. Here is the essential part of his notice :

"M. de Saint-Pierre is not wanting in wit, still less in feeling ; this last quality appears to be his especial and distinctive characteristic. The greater part of the work consists of observations made at sea, and details of natural history. That struck me as very superficial." Nothing about the style, or the descriptive scenes, of which the number ought, one would think, to have arrested his observation. Grunin took the *Voyage* for a scientific work and found it bad ; its originality entirely escaped him. It was the same thing with Leharpe, who does not even mention Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in his *Cours de Litterature*, that is to say, that he took little notice of secondary works. Then Sainte-Beuve, who collected his information with so much care, has contradicted himself about the effect produced by the *Voyage to the Isle of France*. One reads in his first article upon Bernardin de Saint-Pierre : "This narrative had a well-deserved success,"¹ and in his second article, written thirteen years later : "The work received very little notice."²

It is curious to compare the indifference of the men towards Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's attempt, with the enthusiasm of the women for the young unknown author who had spoken to

¹ Portraits littéraires, 1836.

² Causeries du lundi, 1852.

them of the colour of the clouds and the melancholy of the great forests. Women arrive at a conclusion much more quickly than men when it is a question of feeling. The women who read the *Voyage to the Isle of France* understood at once that there was something in it beyond mere observations made at sea and natural history details, more even than sentimental tirades upon the negroes. They divined that they were being introduced to new joys, and they hastened to seek them under the guidance of the sympathetic master who interpreted Nature to them, her beauties, her gentleness, and her passion. The interest which they took in this first work, not very attractive as a whole, was a sort of miraculous instinct on their part.

The *Voyage to the Isle of France* had hardly appeared before Bernardin de Saint-Pierre set to work again, in spite of all his protestations against ever becoming an author. His diffidence had disappeared. He felt himself to be full of courage and spirit, and it was not to his success that he owed this, but simply to a visit which he chanced to pay, and which was in its consequences the great event of his career. "In the month of May, 1772, a friend having proposed to take me to see J. J. Rousseau, he conducted me to a house in the rue Plâtrière, nearly opposite to the Post Office. We ascended to the fourth story and

knocked at the door, which was opened by Mme Rousseau, who said to us, 'Enter, gentlemen, you will find "my husband" in.' We passed through a tiny ante-room, in which were neatly arranged all the household chattels, to a room where J. J. Rousseau was sitting, in a frock-coat, with a white cap on his head, occupied in copying music. He rose with a smile, offered us seats, and returned to his work, giving his attention all the while to the conversation."¹

Rousseau was sixty in 1772; his infirmities, his morbid ideas on the subject of persecution, and his disputes with Hume, had put the finishing touch to his reputation as a dangerous lunatic. His visitor was struck with the sad expression underlying his "smiling air." But he was irresistible when he was not roused. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre joyfully yielded to this all-powerful fascination. He felt that he had found the master in literature who had been wanting to him, he who was to give him the right impulse and direction, and that by oral teaching, so much more fruitful than written instruction.

"Near him," he continues, "was a spinet, on which from time to time he tried over some airs. Two little beds, covered with coarse print, striped blue and white like the hangings of his room, a chest of drawers, a table, and a few

¹ Essay upon J. J. Rousseau.

chairs, completed his furniture. On the walls hung a map of the forest and park of Montmorency, where he had lived, and a print of his old benefactor the king of England. His wife was seated sewing; a canary sang in its cage suspended from the ceiling; some sparrows came to pick up bread-crumbs from the window-sills on the side of the street, and on those of the ante-room one saw boxes and pots full of plants such as Nature chose to sow there. The whole effect of this little household was one of cleanliness, peace, and simplicity, which gave one pleasure."

It suggests one of those interiors of Chardin, where the neat little mistress of the house in white cap and apron is busy about the children's dinner. It is the most charming picture we possess of Rousseau at home.

The conversation turned upon travels, the news of the day, and the works of the master of the house. Rousseau was most gracious all the time, and reconducted his visitors to the head of the stairs; but who could tell with so capricious a being whether this first visit would lead to anything? It did, in fact, to Bernardin's intense satisfaction. "Some days after that he came to return my visit. He had on a round wig, well powdered and curled, a nankeen suit, and carried his hat under his arm. In his hand

he held a small cane. His whole appearance was modest but very neat, as was that of Socrates, we are told."

This second interview also passed off most agreeably, in looking at tropical plants and seeds, but it was followed by the first tiff. Deceived by the good-natured air of his new friend, Saint-Pierre included him in a distribution he was making of coffee, which he had received from the Colonies. Rousseau wrote to him: "Sir, we have only met once, and you already begin to make me presents, that is being a little too hasty it seems to me. As I am not in a position to make presents myself, it is my custom, in order to avoid the annoyance of unequal friendships, not to receive the persons who make me presents; you can do as you like about leaving this coffee with me, or sending to fetch it; but in the first case please accept my thanks, and there will be an end of our acquaintanceship."

They made it up on condition that Saint-Pierre received "a root of ginseng¹ and a work on Ichthyology," in exchange for his coffee. Rousseau appeased, invited him to dinner for the next day. After the repast he read his MSS. to him. They talked, the hours flew by, and there resulted from these difficult beginnings

¹ Chinese name for a bitter-sweet root used in medicine.—
TRANSLATOR.

an intimacy, stormy, as it was bound to be with Jean Jacques, but wonderfully fruitful for the disciple, who drank in deep draughts of the nectar of poetry, if not of wisdom, which fell from the master's lips. All this took place during their long walks together in the environs of Paris. They would start on foot, early in the morning, each choosing in turn the direction of their walk. Rousseau loved the banks of the Seine and the heights above them, as deserted then as they are peopled to-day. They would go through the bois de Boulogne, botanising as they went along, and they sometimes saw in "these solitudes" young girls occupied in making their toilet in the open air. A ferry boat would land the two friends at the foot of Mount Valérien, and they would climb up to visit the hermit at the top, who would give them food; or perhaps Rousseau would lead his companion towards the height of Sèvres, promising him "beautiful pine-woods and purple moors." The "deserted commons" of Saint Cloud had also their attractions; nevertheless all that side of Paris rather erred in the way of extreme wildness. Such a powerful effect did Nature have upon these her first lovers, intoxicated with their discoveries, and whose sensations had not been discounted by descriptions taken from books. '

When Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was the

guide they chose by preference the direction of Prés-Saint-Gervais and Romainville. The familiar and peaceful nooks and corners around these attracted him more than the extreme wildness of Sèvres and Ville-d'Avray. "You have shown me the places which please you," he said; "I am now going to show you one which is to my taste." They passed by the park of Saint-Fargean, absorbed to-day into Belleville, and, by almost imperceptible degrees, gained the gentle heights of those charming solitudes—for they were also solitudes, but less severe than those chosen by Rousseau; green grass there took the place of the brambles of Saint Cloud, and cherry-trees and gooseberry-bushes the dark pines of Sèvres. One had not to seek hospitality from hermits; there were inns, where Rousseau liked himself to make an omelet of bacon, while Saint-Pierre made the coffee, a luxury brought in a box from Paris. They would return by another road, gathering plants and digging up roots as they went; and nothing can express the charm with which the cantankerous and suspicious Jean Jacques knew how to surround these excursions. He showed himself a simple-minded, good fellow, an easy-going and cheery comrade, interesting himself in everything, talking of everything, and lavishing his ideas with the magnificent prodigality of the rich.

Whether Bernardin de Saint-Pierre turned the conversation upon philosophy or questions of economy, upon the Greeks and Romans, or hygiene, upon his father the watchmaker, or upon Voltaire, the stream flowed on in great waves, pouring out pall-mall anecdotes, aphorisms, theories, descriptions of scenery, and literary opinions. One might have said that he was taking his revenge for those conversations in society in which he was known to fall short. "My wit is always half an hour after that of others," he said of himself. It was not so in a *tête-à-tête*, and every one of his words entered like the stroke of a plummet into his young companion's mind, whose ideas had need of a little help before they could burst forth. The effect of all this was not long in showing itself. Saint-Pierre has fixed the dates in a letter to Hennin of July 2, 1778, six years after his intimacy with Rousseau. "At last I hope to find water in my wells; for six years I have jotted down a great many ideas, which require putting in order. Amongst much sand there are, I hope, some grains of gold."

The enchantment of the walks lasted until their return to Paris. Then Rousseau's brow would grow dark at the sight of the first houses of the suburb. His mania resumed possession of him. He frowned, hastened his steps, became

taciturn and morose. One day, when his friend tried to distract him, he stopped short, to say to him all at once, in the middle of the street : " I would rather be exposed to the arrows of the Parthians than to the gaze of men." This mood would sometimes be prolonged as long as they were in the town, and no one was then safe from the strokes of his sarcasm.

" One day, when I went to return a book . . . he received me without saying a word, and with an austere and gloomy air. I spoke to him ; he only replied in monosyllables, continuing all the time to copy music ; he struck out or erased his work every minute. To distract myself, I opened a book which was on the table. ' You like reading, sir ? ' he said, in a discontented tone. I got up to go ; he rose at the same time, and reconducted me to the head of the stairs, saying, when I begged him not to trouble himself : ' One must be ceremonious with persons with whom one is not on a familiar footing.' " Saint-Pierre, hurt, swore that he would never return ; but they met, arranged another walk, and Rousseau once more became amiable at sight of the first bushes. " At last," he said, " here we are beyond the carriages, pavements, and men." ¹

¹ He has expressed the same sentiment, only more energetically, in a passage of the *Huitième Promenade*, where he represents himself as escaping at last from the " procession of the wicked."

Their intimacy lasted until after Rousseau's departure for Ermenonville in 1778, a short time before his death. His friend mourned his loss bitterly, and always spoke of him with tenderness and admiration. He did not forget how much he owed to him. He acknowledged, at least in part—which is, after all, fine and praiseworthy—that if he had shown a spark of the sacred fire, it was Rousseau who had lighted it in their intercourse. He has never sought to hide the fact that his works are strewn with ideas which occurred to them during their walks, and which they had discussed as they sauntered together under the shadow of some tree, or in the green woodland paths. The results of these walks with Jean Jacques will be found in the *Études de la Nature*. In comparing this work with the *Voyage to the Isle of France*, one can see exactly what Bernardin owed to his illustrious friend. The *Voyage* proves to us that he knew what he wished to do long before he met the author of the *Reveries*, but that, at the same time, he would never have reached the goal without the impulse given to him by a genius more robust than his own.

It hung on quite a small chance that his career was not blighted at the very moment when his fancy was preparing to take flight. The success which the *Voyage to the Isle of*

France had with the fair sex nearly proved fatal to its author. Their approval had to be paid for, as is always the case. M. de Saint-Pierre was invited into the fashionable world, and charming women flung themselves at his head, with their habitual indiscretion, and caused him acute suffering. He had scruples, and he was vain. The world laughed at his scruples, his vanity could not console him for its scoffs, and the women did not thank him for his respect; so that his soul was filled with bitterness and disgust. He could not get over the depravity of society, and was seized with a morbid irritation against it. Some months after he had mixed in it, his imagination made it appear to him to be wholly and solely occupied in making fun of him, of his goodness, of his gentleness, of his pride, of all the virtues that he liked to attribute to himself, and which he chose, as is the habit of all of us, amongst those he least possessed. Soon he could not hear any one laugh without thinking they were laughing at him, and every gesture made him suspicious. He said later: "I could not even walk along a path in a public garden where a few people were assembled without thinking, if they looked at me, that they were disparaging me, even if they were quite unknown to me." Thirty years later he was still persuaded that Mlle. de Lespinasse

had intended to insult him one day when she offered him a sweetmeat, at the same time praising him for his kindness on a recent occasion.

He fought duels in order to put a stop to the whispered raillery which he thought he heard around him. Two fortunate affairs were powerless to soothe his nerves, and strange disorders began to make him fear for his reason. He consulted physicians, who recommended diverse remedies ; but he required money for them, and his bookseller had not paid him. Meanwhile the evil grew from bad to worse, and at last came the crisis. "Flashes of light, resembling lightning, disturbed my sight ; every object appeared to me to be double, and as though in motion. . . . My heart was not less troubled than my head. On the finest summer day I could not cross the Seine in a boat without feeling intolerable qualms. . . . If in a public garden I but passed near the basin of a fountain full of water, I felt a sensation of spasm and horror. There were times when I believed that I must have been bitten by a mad dog without knowing it."

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was mad, not incurably so, or enough to be shut up ; but, for all that, mad. He knows it, acknowledges it, and adds to his heartrending confession a note,

which explains how he was able to hide his condition from the world around him. "God granted me this signal favour, that however much my reason was disturbed, I never lost the consciousness of my condition myself, or forgot myself before others. Directly I felt the approach of the paroxysms of my malady, I would retire into solitude." Here follows a slight metaphysical discussion upon "this extraordinary reason," which warned him "that his ordinary reason was disturbed."

Just about the same time his brother Dutailly began the series of extravagances which obliged them to shut him up.

Meantime, the world from which Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had succeeded in hiding himself, was without indulgence for him, and pronounced him to be wicked, while he was in reality only unhappy. We have now arrived at the years of pain, of physical and moral distress, of equivocal ills, absurd suspicions, quarrels, ill-will, and, alas! of begging. Some of his friends became estranged by his incomprehensible humour, others gave him up, and of this number were "the philosophers," d'Alembert, Condorcet, all the intimates of Mlle. de Lespinasse. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre has, in an *Apologie* addressed to Mme. Necker to beg her protection, naïvely explained that he quarrelled with

"the philosophers " because they failed to induce Turgot to help him. "If they had been my friends," he adds, with indignation, "could they have acted so? Pensions, easy posts, rings for their fingers, are distributed to their clients, while to me they only come to advise me to leave the country, although I showed them that I had the greatest repugnance to such a course."¹ (January 26, 1780.)

He retired from the world, living an unsociable life in a miserable lodging-house, not willingly seeing any one but Rousseau, so well able to understand a misanthrope, and a few faithful friends who put up with all his moods, at the head of whom was Hennin, whose patience was admirable. The position which the latter held in the Foreign Office, led to his being charged with the presentation of the petitions that his gloomy and needy friend addressed to the ministers; and the task was not an easy or pleasant one, as their correspondence testifies. Saint-Pierre begged shamelessly. "I have neither linen nor clothes; my excursions on foot have worn them out. If you wish to see me again, induce them to give me the means of appearing. You know that your department

¹ This curious note does not appear in the complete works. It formed part of the collection of autographs belonging to M. Feuillet de Conches. I owe the information to the kindness of Mme. Feuillet de Conches.

decidedly owes me something. . . . Do remember to think of me in the distribution of the king's favours ; I need them greatly. . . . I am reduced to borrowing, and I have nothing to expect till February of next year." And so on from month to month, if not from week to week. If there was delay in sending the money, M. Hennin would receive a bitter letter, in which M. de Saint-Pierre would excuse himself for not having visited him on account of the bad weather, adding: "If I had received the favour which you led me to hope for, I should have taken a carriage." If the money was forthcoming, it was still worse for Hennin, because of the ceremonies with which it had to be conveyed to its recipient. There is amongst their correspondence a series of letters which are quite comic, about a sum of £300 that Saint-Pierre had begged hard for, and which he wished M. de Vergennes personally to press him to accept. He demands a "letter of satisfaction and kindness" from the minister, written with his own hand, without which he refuses the £300. Silence on the part of Hennin, who is evidently overcome by this extraordinary pretentiousness ; uneasiness on the part of Bernardin, who trembles lest he should be taken at his word. The £300 are sent to him ; he pockets them, spends them, and continues to claim his letter.

A year later he is still claiming it, without having ceased to beg in the meantime.

It is true that this took place at a time when the bounties of the king conferred honour upon the recipient, and when the nobility of France set the example of holding out the hat to catch the royal manna. It is true that it took place very near the time when the man of letters lived upon his servile dedications, upon inferior employments among the rich and great, and considered himself only too happy, in the absence of copyright, to repay in flatteries the rent of a room at the Louvre or the Condé mansion. It is true that one must not ask for a strict account from a brain disturbed by hallucinations, and that nothing could relieve the mind of Barnardin de Saint-Pierre of the idea that the French Government owed him compensation for his journey to Poland, where he assured them he had run the risk of being taken by the Russians and sent to Siberia. It was the same with the memorials, with which for fifteen years he harassed people in office, and the others which he promised to send them. The same with the situations which he had lost through his own fault, and those which had been refused to him. The same with his literary works, to which he gave up his time, and that had for their aim the happiness of mankind ; and the same for the

services which he had rendered to his country, a long list of which appears in the *Apologie*. "I remember that in the park at Versailles I pacified an infuriated Breton peasant woman, who intended, she informed me, to go and get up a riot under the very windows of the king. This was during the bread riots. Another time I had a discussion with an atheistical reaper." How was it possible to refuse a pension to a man who had done that!

In common justice they owed him also compensation for the great and glorious things they had prevented him from accomplishing. He had ripened his plan of an ideal colony, and sent project after project to Versailles. Sometimes he offered himself to civilise Corsica, sometimes to conquer Jersey, or North America, or to found a small state in France itself, within the king's dominions. Nobody had deigned to take any notice of his plans, unless perhaps "some intriguing, avaricious protégé" should have stolen his ideas and was preparing to carry them out in his stead; such things did happen sometimes. He laid the blame of the culpable negligence of the Government upon the head clerk of the Foreign Office, and he did not spare his reproaches. The excellent Hennin groaned, grieved over it, but did not get angry. He himself counted upon recom-

pense also, and he did not count in vain. As soon as this mind diseased recovered itself a little, there were most delightful outpourings to the good and true friend who was never harsh or unfeeling. Then there are periods in their correspondence like oases of peace and poetry. In the beginning of 1781 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, at Hennin's suggestion, quitted his wretched furnished room, and took a lodging in the rue Neuve-Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, which he called his donjon, and where cheerfulness streamed in at every window. The staircase was in the courtyard to the right, and on ascending to the fourth story under the roof, one found four small bright rooms, from which one looked out upon a little bit of country. It was nothing but gardens, orchards, convents, peaceful little cottages, the wide sky overhead, and the low horizon. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre felt that he was saved. He wrote a letter to Hennin which is a song of joy. He says :—

“ I shall come to see you with the first violet ; I shall have to walk five miles, but shall do it joyfully, and I intend to give you such a description of my abode as will make you long to come and see me and take a meal with me. Horace invited Mecænas to come to his cottage at Tivoli, to eat a quarter of lamb and drink Falernian wine. As my purse is getting very

low, I shall only offer you strawberries and mugs of milk, but you will have the pleasure of hearing the nightingales sing in the groves of the convent of the English nuns, and of seeing the young novices play in their garden." (February 7, 1781.)

Another year April perfumes the air, and Hennin has promised to come and dine in the donjon. His friend describes the menu to him: "Simple viands, amongst which will be found a big pie that Mme. Mesnard is going to give me; a pure wine, good of its kind; excellent coffee, and punch, which I make well, let me say without vanity." It is a question of fixing a day. "Nature must undertake the chief cost of this little feast, therefore I expect she will have carpeted the paths with verdure and decorated the groves of trees in my landscape with leaves and flowers. If you were an observer of nature, I should say to you start the very first day that you see the chestnut tree set out its chandeliers; but you are one of those who only have eyes for the evolution of human forces. Let me know the day you choose," &c.

The dinner was as charming as the invitation. It was talked of at Versailles, and some fair dames lamented aloud that they had not been invited.

To most of them the donjon would have

appeared a hateful abode: one froze in it in winter and was roasted in summer, and every gust of wind threatened to blow it away. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, obstinate dreamer that he was, preserved all his life the most tender and faithful remembrance of his aërial lodging: "It was there," he wrote in his mature age, "in the midst of a profound solitude, and under a bewitching horizon, that I experienced the sweetest joys of my life. I should perhaps still be there if for a whim they had not forced me to turn out in order to pull it down. It was there that I put the finishing touches to my *Études de la Nature*, and from there I published it."¹ And it is there that one must look upon him in order to do him justice after our earlier sad pictures of him.

Before he became first a morose beggar, suffering with weak nerves, he was, we must remember, possessed with the idea that to a man carrying in his head a book which he believes to be good and useful, all means are fair for accomplishing his destiny of creative artist and intellectual guide. He recognises no choice of means, he is the slave, and at need the victim of a superior power, which commands him to sacrifice his repose and his pride on condition that he acquits himself of his debt

¹ Sequel to the *Vows of a Hermit*.

towards mankind by giving to it a work which will bring a little happiness to our poor world. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was quite certain that he possessed the magic word which lifts up the heart, and rather than throw it to the four winds of heaven, he would have begged alms on the highway. Was he right? was he wrong? We owe it to his great faith to leave our verdict undecided.

Think of him in his garret, and you will understand that he begged not for himself, but for his book, which is a very different matter. He is avaricious because he hopes still to write another chapter before going on the tramp again. He has only one coat for the whole year, winter and summer. He does his own housekeeping, sweeps, cleans, cooks. He allows himself so little firing that in winter the water remains frozen for eight days in his rooms, and his pitchers burst. He goes on foot to Versailles to see Hennin, and returns in the same way at night; all the better if it is moonlight, all the worse if it rains. His health suffers, but his head recovers, and he is happy; he has a "whole trunk" full of rough draughts, which he copies, corrects, and arranges. "You cannot imagine," he writes to Hennin, "the tenderness of an author for his production; that of a mother for her son is not to be compared to it. I am

always adding to or cutting out something of mine. A bear does not lick her cub with more care than I ; I fear in the end I shall rub away the muzzle of mine with my licking. I do not wish to touch it any more. . . . There have been moments when I have caught a glimpse of heaven." (December 18, 1783.)

When the moment arrives to have his work printed, he redoubles his economy. He is sordid and at the same time a greater borrower, more in debt than ever ; for after all it is in order to commit some extravagance for his " child "—to have fine paper, to add a print here, a pretty frontispiece there. The extravagance accomplished, he writes to Hennin, one of his principal lenders, to demonstrate to him that this is an excellent speculation :—

" It is not a superfluous expense, even if the print in 12° itself comes to fourteen or fifteen pounds, because it is possible that many people will buy my work for the print alone, as has happened to others. Moreover, I shall raise the price of my edition with it, so as to reap more than I sowed. So . . ." (June 29, 1784.)

Thus it was as clear as noonday that this lovely engraving would make his fortune, a very important matter to his creditors. We do not possess Hennin's reply, but there is no doubt, after what we know of his kindness, that he made pretence of being convinced.

III.

THE "ÉTUDES DE LA NATURE."

THE *Études de la Nature* appeared in three volumes towards the end of 1784. It did not then comprise the fragments of *l'Arcadie*, which have been since added to it, nor *Paul and Virginia*, which the author had cut out in consequence of an adventure that has been recounted a thousand times, and that we must recount yet again in order to give consolation to any disappointed young man who may be breaking his heart because he is not understood.

Mme. Necker had invited him to come and read some of his MSS. aloud, promising that he should have for his audience some distinguished judges. Amongst them were in fact Buffon, the Abbé Galiani, Thomas, Necker, and some others. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre chose *Paul and Virginia*. At first they listened in silence, then they began to whisper, to pay less attention, to yawn, and finally not to listen at all. Thomas fell asleep, those nearest the door slipped out, Buffon looked at

his watch and called for his carriage. Necker smiled at seeing some of the women, who dared not appear otherwise touched, in tears. The reading ended, not one of these persons, though trained in the world's deceits, could find a word of praise for the author. Mme. Necker was the only person to speak, and it was to remark that the conversations between Paul and the old man suspended the action of the story, and chilled the reader; that it was "a glass of iced water": a very just definition, but ungracious, and it reduced Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to despair.

He thought he was condemned without appeal, and returned to his house so prostrated in spirit that he thought of burning *Paul and Virginia*, the *Études*, and *l'Arcadie*—all his papers in fact—so as not to be tempted to touch them again. One of the Vernets turned up at this crisis, took pity upon his suffering, had the despised work read over to him, and recognised the charm of it. He applauded, wept, proclaimed it a masterpiece, the MSS. are saved, and the author consoled, without, however, gaining sufficient courage to print a work which had sent Thomas to sleep, and put Buffon to flight. *Paul and Virginia* remained in a drawer.

It was the same with the fragments of the

Arcadie, and with much more reason, *l’Arcadie*, begun after the publication of the *Voyage to the Isle of France*, was to be an epic poem in prose in twelve books, and was inspired by *Telemaque* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Saint-Pierre proposed “to represent the three successive states through which most nations pass: that of barbarism, of nature, and corruption.”¹ Notice in passing this progression. The state of nature is not the first state, it is between the two, after the state of barbarism and before the state of over-civilisation, which proves that before admiring or despising natural man, according to the eighteenth century, it is as well to understand the sense which each writer gives to the words.

The picture of these three states furnished our author with the means of expressing his ideas upon the ideal republic which he proposed to form. Thus *l’Arcadie* became the instrument of propagandism, just the thing to lead M. de Saint-Pierre to fortune, and he never forgave himself for having given up this work, a little through Rousseau’s fault, who proclaimed the plan of the book admirable, but, nevertheless, advised him to re-write it from beginning to end. Jean Jacques acknowledged at the same time, with a smile, that he had ceased to believe

¹ Introduction to *l’Arcadie*.

in poetical and virtuous shepherds since a certain journey which he had taken beside the Lignon : " I once made an excursion to Forez," he continued, with the geniality of his good days, " solely to see the country of Celadon and Astrea, of which Urfé gives us such charming pictures. Instead of loving shepherds, I only saw on the banks of the Lignon farriers, blacksmiths, and edge-tool makers." " What ! " cried Saint-Pierre, overwhelmed with astonishment, " that all, in so delightful a country ? " " It is only a country of smithies," replied Rousseau. " It was that journey to Forez which cured me of my illusion ; up to that time never a year passed without my reading Astrea from end to end. I was acquainted with all its characters. Thus does science rob us of our pleasures.¹ "

It was in the bois de Boulogne, seated under a tree, that Jean Jacques Rousseau taught his astonished disciple not to take the Astrea for history. He also told him with great modesty that he felt himself incapable of governing the Republic of their dreams ; that all he could

¹ That is Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's account of the conversation. In reality, Rousseau had not visited le Forez. He had been tempted to go there, but was dissuaded from his project by " a landlady " whom he consulted as to the route he should follow, and whose description prevented him from going to seek Dianas and Sylvanders amongst a population of blacksmiths. (*The Confessions*, year 1732.)

do would be to live in it. This declaration piqued Bernardin de Saint-Pierre; he thought he perceived an underlying criticism, and enlarged with enthusiasm upon the sublime virtues of his future subjects which would make them easy to govern. But even while disputing about it he grew disgusted with *l'Arcadie*, put it on one side, and used up the materials for his *Études*. Posterity has no reason to regret it. The fragments which have reached us suggest a work in which the ideas are false and the characters conventional. One reads in it for example: "One could see by her timidity that she was a shepherdess." The contrary is the case in point of fact, and Saint-Pierre knew it better than any one; he who had trotted on foot through the whole of Normandy in quest of models for his heroes, before tracing the portraits of the beautiful Cyanée of Tirteé, her father, and their guest Amasis. His rustics seem to be drawn by a wit who is a clumsy imitator of Fénelon. He was quite wise to give it up.

According to his correspondence, the *Études de la Nature* was begun in 1773. The plan of it was at that time gigantic. He informs us on the first page that he wished "to write a general history of nature, in imitation of Aristotle, of Pliny, of Bacon, and other modern celebrities." He set to work, but he soon acknowledged, in

making his observations of a strawberry-plant, that he would never have the time to observe all that there is on the earth. Although the page upon the strawberry-plant has become classical, it is as well to re-read it in order to be able to realise its effect upon readers, who up to that time had dwelt upon our beautiful Mother Earth deaf and blind, without hearing the pulsation of her life, without seeing her prodigious eternal productiveness.

“One summer day . . . I perceived upon a strawberry-plant, which had by chance been placed upon my window-sill, a lot of little flies, so pretty, that I became possessed of the wish to describe them. The next day I saw another kind, and of them also I wrote a description. During three weeks I observed thirty-seven different species of them ; but they came in such numbers at last, and in so many varieties, that I gave up the study of them, although it was most interesting, because I had not sufficient leisure, or, to tell the truth, sufficient command of language for the task.

“The flies which I did observe were distinguished from each other by their colours, their forms, and their habits. There were some of a golden hue, some silver, some bronze, speckled, striped, blue, green, some dusky, some iridescent. In some the head was round like a turban ; in

others, flat like the head of a nail. In some they appeared dark like a spot of black velvet ; in others, they shone out like a ruby. There was no less variety in their wings ; some had them long and brilliant like a sheet of mother-o'-pearl ; in others, they were short and broad, resembling the meshes of the finest gauze. Each one had its own way of carrying its wings and of using them. Some carried them erect, and others horizontally, and they seemed to take pleasure in spreading them out. Some would fly, fluttering about like butterflies ; others would rise in the air, flying against the wind by aid of a mechanism somewhat resembling toy beetles. Some would alight upon a plant to deposit their eggs ; others simply to seek shelter from the sun. But most of them came for reasons which were quite unknown to me ; for some flew to and fro in perpetual movement, while others only moved their backs. There were some who remained quite immoveable, and were, perhaps, like me, engaged in making observations. I disdained, as I already knew them so well, all the tribes of other insects who were attracted to my strawberry-plant : such as the snails who nestled under its leaves ; the butterflies who fluttered around it ; the beetles who dug at its roots ; the little worms who found the means of living in the cellular tissue, that is

to say, simply in the thickness of a leaf; the wasps and the bees who hummed about its flowers; the aphids who sucked the stems, the ants who ate up the aphids; and last of all, the spiders who wove their webs near at hand in order to catch all these different victims."

He then had recourse to the microscope to examine into the world of the infinitely little, and saw that the only limit to his observation was the imperfections of our instruments; each leaf of the strawberry-plant was a little universe in which creatures invisible to the naked eye were born, lived, and died. This led to the reflection that his plant would be much more peopled if it had not been in a pot, in the midst of the smoke of Paris; that, moreover, he had only made his observations of it at one hour of the day, and at one season of the year; and he perceived that the complete history of one species of plant, comprising its relations with the animal world, would be sufficient to occupy several naturalists. His thoughts turned to the immense number of plants and animals known to us, and to the small amount of attention which up to that time had been given to their instincts, their appearances, their friendships and enmities, so that almost everything remained still to be found out. He thought over the weakness of his intention, and acknowledged

himself vanquished at the outset. Far from being able to embrace in his work this formidable mass of information which we call creation, he felt himself incapable of explaining fully even its details. "All my ideas," he wrote to Hennin, "are but the shadows of nature, collected by another shadow." He also compared himself to a child who has dug a hole in the sand with a shell, to contain the sea. So he gave up his project of writing a general history, and lowered his ambition till it was more in accordance with his powers, declaring himself satisfied that he had given his readers some new delights, and extended their views in the infinite and mysterious world of nature.

Nevertheless, if his work was given to the public only in a curtailed and mutilated form, his object remained, The *Études de la Nature* was destined to paraphrase the first part of Fénelon's *Traité de l'existence de Dieu*, especially of the second chapter, entitled "Proofs of the Existence of God, taken from the Consideration of the Chief Marvels of Nature." Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was born religious at heart in an age which had "lost the taste for God," to use Bossuet's expression, when believers themselves were wanting in spirit and tenderness. He was brought up upon the celebrated phrase of Voltaire—"The people must have a religion"

—and never could reconcile himself to hear repeated around him that in truth, “Religion is the portion of the people, just a kind of political engine invented to keep them in check” (*Études*). Atheism seemed to him a diminution of our being, a lessening of its most noble sensations and its most elevated emotions. “It is only religion,” he said, “which gives to our passions a lofty character”; and he related, apropos of this, that the day on which he himself had perceived most vividly the power of the “divine majesty” of suffering was in contemplating a peasant woman from Caux prostrated at the foot of the cross one stormy day, praying, with clasped hands, her eyes cast up to heaven, for a boat which was in danger. The seventeenth century would not have admitted for poetical reasons that they believed thus in God. Men’s minds were then too serious; and the great spiritual directors of the time of Bossuet and Bourdaloue, without mentioning the Jansenists, would have been shocked at the sentimental religion of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. But the eighteenth century had taught men to be less nice, and such things appeared to it to be sublime.

It must be said that they were very tired of arguments and philosophy, and the idea that

they might seek for truth by some less tiresome paths was very pleasing. They had for so long lived like the Carthusian friars of the *Harmonies*. "One day one of my friends went to visit a Carthusian friar. It was the month of May; the garden of the recluse was covered with flowers, in the borders and on the fruit-trees. As for him, he had shut himself up in his room, from which he could see absolutely nothing. 'Why,' asked my friend, 'have you closed your shutters?' 'In order,' replied the friar, 'to be able to meditate without distraction on the attributes of God.' 'Ah!' said my friend, 'don't you think that perhaps you may find greater distraction in your own heart than nature would give to you in the month of May? Take my advice, open your shutters and shut the door upon your imagination.'"

Open your shutters and shut your books, cried this new-comer in the world of letters. Nature is the source of everything which is ingenious, useful, pleasant and beautiful, but she must be contemplated in all simplicity of heart. It is for our happiness that she hides from us the laws which govern her mighty forces, and there is a kind of thoughtless impiety in wishing to penetrate too deeply into her mysteries. Besides, we always fail, and our imprudent efforts only succeed in adding the

mist of our errors to the cloud which veils her divinity. Let us make up our minds to not being taken into the Divine confidence ; content to examine Nature at work, observing her work without studying it on a system, forgetting what the scholars and the academies have decided and decreed as a matter of doctrine. The forces of Nature, ever young and active, form one of the most wonderful and admirable spectacles which the universe affords us. The same spirit of life which formed our world out of chaos, continues to develop the germs under our eyes, to repair the wounded plants and renew their injured tissues with fresh growths. They tell you that Nature brings forth at hazard, producing pell-mell and indifferently the good and the bad, annulling the good by this disorder. But I tell you that not a blade of grass has been made at hazard, and that the least mite testifies to the existence of a sovereign intelligence and goodness. I assure you also that this goodness has only had one pre-occupation—yourself ; but one aim—your happiness. God made nature for man, and man for Himself. Man is the end and aim of everything upon the earth, and the proofs of this are infinite in number.

A great part of the *Études* is taken up with the gathering together of these proofs. I do not believe that there exists another so intrepid

a partisan of final causes. Nothing turns him from his demonstration, not facts, nor absurdities, nor ridicule. Things are so because it is necessary to the happiness of man that they should be so : nothing turns Bernardin de Saint-Pierre from that opinion. I do not say that he scoffed at science ; he looked upon himself as a scientific spirit who was to set his predecessors right, including Descartes and Newton ; I only say that he speaks about it rather as though he were laughing at it.

Our earth, then, has been solidified, modelled and carved out by God for our needs and our comfort. There is not a mountain whose height, breadth, and site have not been calculated by Divine wisdom for our advantage. One is intended to refresh us with its ice, the other to protect us from the north wind, a third to produce a healthful current of air ; this last we call eolian. Those islands of rock strewn along the seashore, and vulgarly called sand-banks, are fortifications placed there by Providence, without which our coasts would be demolished by the ocean. Those which one remarks at the mouths of water-courses "form channels for the rivers, each channel taking a different direction, so that if one becomes stopped up by the winds or the currents from the sea, the water can escape by another." It speaks for

itself that God does not have to try a thing over and over again before it is perfect. Creation was perfect from the first day, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre suppresses the slow evolutions, due to the action of the forces of nature, which according to some incessantly alter the surface of the earth. That surface is unchangeable. There is no example that the sea ever "hollowed out a bay, or detached anything from the continent;" that the "rivers formed at their entrance into the sea sand-banks and promontories;" that ancient ports had been effaced, islands destroyed, or mountains denuded and levelled to the ground. In truth, the works of God, like those of man, are subject to wear, and need reparation; but the Divine Architect is never idle, and works without ceasing to maintain them, which amounts to the same thing.

The means which He employs for reparation often escape our notice from their very simplicity. What pedestrian has not execrated the clouds of sand or dust which the wind raises on the strand or on barren plains. He would have been rather astonished if he had known that he was witnessing the dispersal of materials designed by Providence to replace the soil in the mountains, which had been worn away by water. Sand and dust are transported to the tops of the peaks upon the wings of storms,

thanks to the "fossil attractions" of the mountains.

It was six years after Buffon's *Époques de la Nature* had appeared, that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre offered to the public this astonishing system of the Universe. It needed a certain amount of courage to be so deliberately behind-hand.

The theory of final causes thus carried to extremes occasioned a good deal of embarrassment to the Deist. It is no slight matter to undertake to explain, to the advantage of Providence, everything that there is upon the earth without any exception; so many things appear useless, so many hurtful, Saint-Pierre never despaired of finding justification for every one of them, with human happiness as its basis. He went on bravely without disturbing himself that the laugh was at his expense, and with an ardour of conviction which convinced many of the men and almost all the women who read him. The spirit of that day was not very scientific.

Of what use are volcanoes? Hardly any one has failed to perceive that rivers are, so to speak, the drains of the continent. The oils, the resin, and the nitre of vegetables and animals "are carried by the water-courses to the sea, where all their component parts become dissolved, covering

the surface with fatty matter, which does not evaporate because it resists the action of the air. Without the intervention of Providence the entire ocean since the existence of the world would be defiled with these tainted oils ; but Providence made volcanoes, and the waters were purified. In fact, volcanoes “do not proceed from heat inside the earth, but they owe their origin to the waters, and the matter contained in them. One can convince one’s self of this fact by remarking that there is not a single volcano in the interior of a continent, unless it is in the neighbourhood of some great lake like that of Mexico.” Nature, obeying a Divine impulse, has “lighted these vast furnaces on the shores of the ocean,” so that the oils of which we have spoken, being attracted towards them by a phenomenon which the author does not explain, are burnt up as the weeds in a garden are burnt in the autumn by a careful gardener. One does in truth find lava in the interior of a country, but a proof that it owes its origin to water is that the volcanoes which have produced it have become extinct, when the waters have failed. Those volcanoes were lighted there like those of our day, by the animal and vegetable fermentations with which the earth was covered after the Deluge, when the remains of so many forests and so many animals, whose trunks and

bones are still found in our quarries, floated on the surface of the ocean, forming huge deposits, which the currents accumulated in the cavities of the mountains, so that the ancient craters of the Auvergne mountains prove that all volcanoes are found beside the sea. Inundations afford us the pleasures of boating and fishing. That is the reason that the nations which inhabit the shores of the Amazon and the Orinico, and many other rivers which overflow their banks, looked upon these inundations as blessings from heaven before the arrival of Europeans, who upset their ideas: "Was it, then, so displeasing a spectacle for them to see their immense forests intersected by long water-roads, which they could navigate without trouble of any sort in their canoes, and of which they could gather in the produce with the greatest ease? Some colonies like those on the Orinico, convinced of these advantages, had adopted the strange habit of living in the tops of trees, like the birds, seeking board, lodging and shelter under their foliage. In spite of the epithet *strange*, one feels that he regretted these picturesque manners, and that it would not have displeased him at all to see the dwellers on the banks of the Loire, nesting with the magpies and jays in their own poplars."

Beasts of prey rid the earth of dead bodies,

which without them would not fail to infect the air. Every year there dies a natural death at least the twentieth part of the quadrupeds, the tenth part of the birds, and an infinite number of insects, of which most of the species only live a year. There are some insects even who only live a few hours, such as the ephemera. This enormous destruction would soon poison the air and the water without the aid of the innumerable army of grave-diggers created and maintained by Nature to keep the surface of the globe clean. Saint-Pierre draws a description of it which is wonderful for its colour and spirit : " It is above all in hot countries, where the effects of decomposition are most rapid and most dangerous, that Nature has multiplied carnivorous animals. Tribes of lions, tigers, leopards, panthers, civet-cats, lynxes, jackals, hyenas, condors, &c., there come to reinforce the wolves, foxes, martens, otters, vultures, ravens, &c. Legions of voracious crabs make their homes in the sand there ; alligators and crocodiles lie in ambush amongst their reeds, an innumerable species of shell-fish, armed with implements to enable them to suck, to bore, to file, to crush, bristle on the rocks and pave their sea-shores. Clouds of sea-birds fly screaming along the rocks, or sail round them on the tops of the waves seeking their prey ; eels, garfish, shad, and every species of carti-

lagoonous fish which only lives upon flesh, such as long sharks, big skate, hammer-fish, octopuses armed with suckers, and every variety of dog-fish, swim about in shoals, occupied all the time in devouring the remains of the dead bodies which collect there. Nature also musters insects to hasten on the destruction. Wasps armed with shears cut the flesh, flies pump out the fluids, marine worms separate the bones . . . What remains of all these bodies, after having served as food to numberless shoals of other kinds of fish, some with snouts formed like a spoon, others like a pipe, so that they can pick up every crumb from the vast table, at last converted by so many digestions into oils and fats and added to the vegetable pulps which descends from all parts into the ocean, would reproduce a new chaos of putrefaction in its waters, if the currents did not carry it to the volcanoes, the fires of which succeed in decomposing it and giving it back to the elements. It is for this reason, as we have already indicated, that volcanoes . . . are all in the neighbourhood of the sea or big lakes."

How happy are the poets! for they can talk nonsense with impunity. With all his extravagant ideas, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre has brought home to us like no one else, the sensation of the activity of Nature, and of the

swarming life which covers the earth, moves inside it, and fills the air and the sea.

He had quite foreseen that people would oppose to all this the sufferings inflicted by beasts of prey, large and small, upon living animals, men even, but this objection did not embarrass him in the least. As far as animals are concerned, it would disappear of itself only by taking a broader view of things. "It is true," he said, "several species of carnivorous beasts devour living animals. . . . Let us return to the great principle of Nature: she has made nothing in vain. She destines few animals to die of old age, and I believe even that it is only man whom she permits to run through the entire course of life, because it is only man whose old age can be useful to his fellows. Among animals what would be the use of unreflecting old age to their posterity, which is born with the instinct which takes the place of experience? On the other hand, how would the decrepid parents find sustenance among their children who leave them the moment they know how to swim, fly, or walk? Old age would be for them a weight from which the wild beasts deliver them." Let us add that to them death means little suffering, they are generally destroyed in the night during their sleep. "They do not attach to this fatal

moment any of the feelings which render it so bitter to the greater part of humanity—the regrets for the past and anxieties for the future. *In the midst of a life of innocence, often with their dreams of love still fresh, their untroubled spirits wing their flight into the shades of night.* It is very prettily phrased, but unhappily no one has ever succeeded, often as they have tried, in convincing those who are eaten that it is for their good."

The objection relative to man is dismissed with the same ease. "Man has nothing to fear from beasts of prey. Firstly, most of them only go abroad in the night, and they possess striking characteristics which announce their approach even before they become visible. Some of them have strong odours of musk like the marten, the civet cat, and the crocodile ; others shrill voices which can be heard for long distances in the night like the wolves and jackals ; again, others have strongly-marked colours which can be distinguished a long way off upon the neutral tint of their skins : such are the dark stripes of the tiger and the distinct spots of the leopard. They all have eyes which shine in the darkness. . . . Even those which attack the human body have distinguishing signs ; either they have a strong odour like the bug, or contrasts in colour to the parts to which they attach themselves,

like white insects on the hair, or the blackness of fleas against the whiteness of the skin." How about niggers and their fleas?

The flea's usefulness does not stop with its blackness, it is also useful from the point of view of political economy, by obliging "the rich to employ those who are destitute, in the capacity of domestics, to keep things clean about them." Furthermore hail, with the help of its ally, the hurricane, destroys a great many insects; earthquakes are no less necessary and useful, their function being to purify the atmosphere. Hail, tempests, earthquakes, are in reality so many benefactors, unrecognised because we are not penetrated to the marrow of our bones with these fundamental truths: the happiness of man is the first law of the world; "nothing superfluous exists, only such things as are useful relatively to man."

Here are some more proofs which Bernardin de Saint-Pierre considers striking. Nature invented the hideous scorpion to be a salutary terror to us, to keep us away from damp, unhealthy places, its ordinary abode. She has given four teats to the cow, which only brings forth one calf at a time, and a dozen to the sow, who has to bring up as many as fifteen young ones, and this because mankind, liking milk and pork, the cow had to be made to give us of

"the superabundance of her milk, and the sow of that of her young."

What shall be said of the "royal foresight" of the Divinity when it wishes to act upon our hearts and prepare them to learn patience, or open them to gentle feelings? Every one of us has mourned a dog, and has asked himself why these faithful animals have so short a life. Listen to the answer. "If the death of the dog of the house reduces our children, whose companion and contemporary he has been, to despair, doubtless Nature wished to give them, through the loss of an animal so worthy of human affection, their first experience of the privations of which human life is full." The example of the melon and the pumpkin is still more characteristic. While most fruits are cultivated for the mouth of man, like cherries and plums, or for his hand like pears and apples, the melon much larger and divided into quarters, "seems intended to be eaten by the family." As for the enormous pumpkin, Nature intends that one should share it with one's neighbours; it is pre-eminently a sociable fruit.

In spite of all these benefits, we hear our impious race accusing Nature, and blaspheming Providence. We are angry against Heaven when we suffer, when this or that fails us, as though Providence could be at fault, and as

though we were not ourselves the real authors of our woes. A little faith, a little confidence, and we should be comforted, but we do not possess it, and we rush to our ruin through ignorance and unbelief, just as it happened one day to some men who had landed upon a desert island where there were no cocoa-nut trees. Soon the sea "threw upon the strand several sprouting cocoa-nuts, as if Providence were eager to persuade them by this useful and agreeable present to remain upon the island and cultivate it." Notice that this was not brought about by any chance currents, because sea-currents are regular, and those which surrounded this island had had time since the creation of the world to sow it with all sorts of seeds. "However that may be, the emigrants planted the cocoa-nuts, and in the course of a year and a half they sent up shoots four feet in height. So marked a favour from Heaven was, nevertheless, not sufficient to keep them in this happy spot: a thoughtless desire to procure for themselves wives, induced them to leave it, and plunged them in a long series of misfortunes, which most of them could not survive. *For my part, I do not doubt that if they had had that confidence in Providence which they owed to her, she would have sent wives to them in their desert island, as she had sent them cocoa-nuts.*"

Providence also takes touching care of the animals. The thorns of the brambles and bushes protect the little birds in their nests, and collect the sheep's wool to line the nests with. Ermines have the tips of their tails black, "so that these small animals, entirely white, when going after one another in the snow, where they leave hardly any footmarks, may recognise one another in the luminous reflections of the long nights of the North." Hairy animals are generally white underneath because white keeps them warmer than any other colour, and because "the stomach needs most heat on account of the digestive and other functions ; on the other hand, the head is always the deepest in colour, above all in hot countries, because that part has most need of coolness in the animal economy." It is also for the last reason that several of the birds in hot regions have tufts and crests on their heads, to shade them. Lastly, all animals without exception find their table set for them ever since the world began, even those who only feed upon carrion. "Ancient trees grow in the depths of new forests to afford sustenance to the insects and birds who find it in their aged trunks. *Corpses were created for the carnivorous animals.* In every age there must come forth creatures young, old, living and dying." There is always an essential difference in the methods of Providence towards

animals, and towards man. God takes care of us for our own sakes, He only takes care of animals or plants as they affect us, and in such measure as they are useful or agreeable to us. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was never tired of making remarks in support of these diverse opinions, and we could multiply quotations indefinitely, but what has already been said gives an adequate idea of his theory of the universe.

At first sight we are inclined to shrug our shoulders and pity the final causes for having found an advocate capable of such sad nonsense; but on reflection we are obliged to admit that once the principle is conceded, there is no means of stopping one's self in the downward course. Why admit this final cause and reject that one? If the world is arranged for the happiness of man, ought we not to explain the utility of moths and weevils after that of wool and corn? And if we see in it, as Saint-Pierre did, a means of compelling the monopolists to sell their merchandise for fear that the poor would have to go naked or die of hunger, have we not the right to maintain that one argument is worth another, and that it would be difficult to you to find a better? On the whole, Bernardin only developed Fénelon's idea, who also subordinated the creation to man, and was led by that, in spite of all his cleverness, to affirm

that the stars were made to give us light ; that the dog is born "to give us a pleasant picture of society, friendship, fidelity, and tender affection ;" that wild beasts are intended "to exercise the courage, strength, and skill of mankind." Between Fénélon and Saint-Pierre, as between all determined partisans of final causes, it is only a question of more or less ingenuity, and Saint-Pierre was very ingenious. Grimm wrote, "I do not believe that any man had as yet ventured to recognise Providence, or to attribute to it more skilful attention, more refined research, more delicacy of feeling, but his idea is carried beyond all bounds, and leads him occasionally into all kinds of nonsense and absurd puerilities. His book is one long collection of eclogues, hymns and madrigals in honour of Providence."¹ The *Études de la Nature* makes us still better able to understand the warmth with which Buffon repudiated the theory of final causes.

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre would have been immensely astonished if he had been told that he was labouring to prepare generations of pessimists by attributing to Providence the cares and solicitude of a nurse in its relations with men. Nothing was further from his thoughts, and yet nothing is more certain from the moment that

¹ Literary Correspondence, April, 1785.

his works became a success with the public, and exerted an influence over men's minds. Man once convinced that his happiness is the concern of God, considers it the duty of the Divinity to secure it. In misfortune he has no patience to bear his troubles, because he looks upon himself as injured by Providence. The horror of the injustice done to him redoubles his suffering, and he curses the Heaven which does not respect his rights. It would be doing too much honour to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre if we were to make him answerable for the gloomy and bitter turn of mind of our contemporaries, but he certainly helped it on, since for a thoughtful mind his philosophy has a fatal tendency to demonstrate the fallibility of Providence.

He perceived the difficulty quite well, and felt that it is not sufficient to keep repeating over and over again the axiom: "All is for the best in the best of worlds." When one has finished repeating it, the evil is not ended or explained. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was only too glad to fall back upon his own century, on which he had turned his back during his religious exaltation, and to explain by reasons taken from Diderot and Jean-Jacques the sufferings of humanity in a world created perfect. So he wrote: "Man is born good; it is society that makes bad people, and your

education which prepares them." Man is born good ; take the savages, who alone upon the earth still possess "real virtue." A good man continues happy so long as he does not turn aside from "the law of nature." Take the savages again—their happiness is perfect, according to the missionaries, so long as they have no intercourse with civilised nations. Society "makes bad people" by its stupid and brutal laws, which ignore and defy those of nature and precipitate us into abysses of evil. Our education prepares our young people to be in their turn wicked, because it is founded upon the false idea with which our whole civilisation is impregnated : it develops the intelligence instead of developing the heart. Nature "does not wish man to be skilful and vainglorious ; she wishes him to be happy and good." We are going against her intentions when we undertake to invent scientific systems which "deprave the heart," instead of cultivating sweet and tender sentiments amongst our children. In doing so we commit a criminal error every day of our lives, the fatal consequences of which are quite apparent. Consider what man has become under the influence of this civilisation of which we are so proud.

"Nature, which intended him to be loving, did not furnish him with arms, and so he forged

them himself to fight his fellows with. She provides food and shelter for all her children ; and the roads leading to our towns are only distinguishable from afar by their gibbets ! The history of nature presents only benefits, that of man nothing but wrath and rapine." And further on : " There are many lands which have never been cultivated ; but there are none known to Europeans which have not been stained with human blood. Even the lonely wastes of the sea swallow up in their depths shiploads of men sent to the bottom by their fellows. In the towns, flourishing as they seem with their arts and monuments, pride and cunning, superstition and impiety, violence and treachery, wage their eternal strife and fill with trouble the lot of the unfortunate inhabitants. *The more civilised the society there, the more cruel are its evils and the more they increase in number.*"

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had his Rousseau beside him, when he thus launched his anathemas against civilisation and the sciences. He occasionally makes use of expressions which closely recall the *Discours sur les lettres, les sciences et les arts*, and the *Discours sur l'inégalité parmi les hommes*. Unhappily for his thesis, his eloquent rage against our social state rings false. We feel that it is a rhetorical artifice to help him out of the difficulty of his theory of final causes, and

to open out a way for him to bring at last his character of legislator before the public. The occasion was unique for showing to France what she had lost through the incapacity of her ministers, who allowed the memorials of M. de Saint-Pierre to moulder in their portfolios. We thus return to *Robinson Crusoe*, the ideal colony, and those famous laws of nature which it is our mission to contrast with the laws made by man.

The laws of nature are "moral" and "sentimental" laws; they comprise in the first place all the good and noble sentiments which God has placed in our hearts. Just as reason is a miserable and inferior faculty, so sentiment is the glory and strength of mankind; man owes to it everything great and splendid which he has ever accomplished. "Reason has produced many men of mind in the so-called civilised ages, and sentiment men of genius in the so-called barbarous ages. Reason varies from age to age, sentiment is always the same. Errors of reason are local and transitory, the truths of sentiment are unchanging and universal. By reason the ego is made Greek, English, Turkish; by sentiment it becomes human, divine. . . . In truth, reason gives us some pleasures; but if it reveals some portion of the order of the universe, it shows us at the same time our own

destruction, which is involved in the laws of its preservation. It shows us at once past ills and those that are to come. . . . The wider it explores it brings back to us the evidence of our nothingness ; and far from calming our anxieties by its researches, it often only increases them by its knowledge. On the contrary sentiment, blind in its desires, surveys the relics of all countries and all times ; it trusts in the midst of ruins, of battles, even of death, in some vague eternal existence ; in all its yearnings it strives after the attributes of the Divinity—infinity, scope, duration, power, greatness, and glory ; it adds ardent desire to all our passions, gives to them a sublime impulse, and in subjugating our reason, becomes itself the noblest and best instinct of human life.” We must correct Descartes and say : “ I feel, therefore I exist.”

The apotheosis of sentiment, “ blind in its desires ” and indomitable in their pursuit, which “ subjugates our reason ” and makes us act on impulse, strongly resembles an apotheosis of passion, and in fact has led to it. So George Sand strikes some roots in the insipid sensibility of the last century, but we know already that it was not within the scope of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to calculate the not very remote consequences of his principles. He dreamt, without the very least anxiety, of a world entirely

governed by sentiment, and emancipated from that abominable reason. No danger could threaten this regenerated community, because its leader had sorted out the sentiments common to humanity, and only allowed such of them to prevail as pity, innocence, admiration, melancholy, and love. This choice promised to the world a succession of Idylls. As for the bad sentiments, hate, avarice, jealousy, ambition, there was no need to take them into consideration or to fear their usurpation; they would disappear from the face of France so soon as the plan of education placed at the end of the *Études de la Nature* had been adopted.

There is nothing like coming at the right time. At the beginning of the Revolution these sort of things were listened to with a contrite spirit, and no one thought of laughing at them, such sentiments appeared as wise as they were beautiful; no one doubted his own virtue and goodness, and all rejoiced in this picture of the delightful emotions which awaited the new society. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre laboured to draw seductive pictures of it, and his efforts have procured us some analyses of public feeling which their date render most interesting.

His chapter on *Melancholy* is one of the most interesting. Melancholy had only lately come into fashion, and he exerted himself to

inquire into the source of this seductive sentiment, the sweetest and most cherished poison of the soul. He to some extent recognised the danger of it, for the word *voluptuous* occurs several times under his pen : " I do not know," he wrote, " to what physical law the philosopher may attribute the sensations of melancholy. For my part I think that they are the most voluptuous impressions of the soul." That is very finely expressed and very true. Further on, apropos of people who try by artificial means to give themselves sensations of melancholy, he writes : " Our voluptuaries have artificial ruins erected in their gardens. . . . The tomb has supplied to the poetry of Young and Gessner pictures full of charm ; therefore our voluptuaries have imitation tombs put up in their gardens." He is himself " a voluptuary " when he solaces his woes, by abandoning himself to the melancholy which bad weather creates in him. " It seems to me at such times that nature conforms to my situation like a tender friend. She is, besides, always so interesting under whatever aspect she reveals herself, that when it rains I seem to see a beautiful woman in tears, all the more beautiful the more she is distressed. In order to experience these sentiments, which I dare to call voluptuous, we must have no plans for going out, or paying visits, or hunting, or travelling,

which always put us into a bad temper, because we are thwarted; . . . to enjoy bad weather it is necessary that our soul should travel, our body stay quiet."

We have in these lines a great science of melancholy, given to us by a refined "voluptuary" who understands how to give to agreeable sensations their maximum of enjoyment. One is quite taken in to find directly after a series of pretentious articles in the manner of the day, in which Bernardin de Saint-Pierre explains the *pleasure of the grave* by the sentiment of the immortality of the soul, and *the pleasure of decay* by that of the infinity of time. I notice in it, however, an effort to interest the reader in the real and native gothic ruins, which might be called daring, at that time of mania for filling one's garden with Greek and Roman erections: imitation temples, imitation tombs, imitation columns, and imitation ruins, ornamented with allegorical emblems and sentimental inscriptions. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre did not oppose this classical bric-à-brac which pleased him only too well, but he possessed to a greater extent than his contemporaries the sense of the picturesque, which bore fruit in some romantic scenes like the description of the Château of Lillebonne.

The château is perched on a height commanding a valley. "The high walls which

surround it are rounded off at the corners, and so covered with ivy that there are but few points from which one can mark their course. About the middle of their length, where I should think it would not be easy to penetrate, rise high battlemented towers, upon the tops of which grow big trees, having the appearance of a thick head of hair. Here and there through the carpet of ivy which covers their sides, are gothic windows, embrasures and gaps resembling mouths of caverns, through which one can see the stairs. The only birds to be seen flying round this desolate habitation, are buzzards, which hover about in silence ; and if occasionally the cry of a bird is heard, it is sure to be an owl whose nest is there. . . . When I remember at sight of this stronghold, that it was formerly inhabited by petty tyrants who from there used to plunder their unlucky vassals and even travellers, I seem to see the carcass of some great beast of prey." This conclusion is from a man who, in default of an historical sense, has at least an historical imagination.

Love inspires him with a charming page on the expansion of every living thing during the love-season. The plant opens its flowers, the bird puts on his most beautiful plumage, the wild beasts fill the forests with their roaring, and the soul of the young man "receives its full

expansion." His soul also opens its flowers and exhales its perfume of generosity, candour, heroism, and holy faith, and love adorns it with wondrous graces which take the form of "all the characteristics of virtue." It is a dazzling metamorphosis, and it is in some sort a disguise, for the virtues, which are only a transformation of love, run great danger of evaporating with the age of love, like the parade dress of certain birds in the Indies, which are only lent by nature during the pairing season. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre remarks that certainly young men have some modesty, and that "most of our old men have none at all, because they have lost the feeling of love." Honour to the sentiment which thus raises us above ourselves! It is a great thing to have felt certain things once in our lives.

Admiration is another of the moral laws by which nature, left to herself, governs the earth. The author adds to it the *pleasures of ignorance*, which he declares to be incomparable. Ignorance is the supreme blessing from Heaven, the masterpiece of nature, "the never-failing source of our pleasures." We owe to it the exquisite enjoyments of mystery. It takes away all our ills, and embellishes the good things of this life with illusion, upholds the poetry of the world against science. "It is science which has

hurled the chaste Diana from her nocturnal chariot ; has banished the wood-nymphs from our ancient forests and the sweet naiads from our fountains. Ignorance invited the gods to share in its joys, its sorrows, its hymeneal festivities and its funeral rites : science sees nothing there but the elements. It has abandoned man to man, and thrown him upon the earth as into a desert." Every epoch which repudiates the supernatural will recognise itself in this *man abandoned to man*, and feeling that he is in a desert.

It would have been best to stop there, glorifying ignorance on poetical grounds only. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre spoilt everything by insisting on the misdeeds of science. He wished to profit by the occasion to crush his enemies the Academicians, men with systems, who never appeared to take his theories seriously, and he gravely affirms that ignorance is the only preservative against the errors into which the "so-called human sciences" plunge us. When one knows nothing, one is sure to know no nonsense. Let it be said in passing that the scientific works of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre confirm this maxim ; for if he had not learnt geometry, he would not have said such absurd things as we shall see presently, and which covered him with ridicule in the eyes of the

scholars of his day. But he did not think of himself in celebrating the advantages of perfect ignorance ; in such a case one never does think of oneself.

After the preceding, one does not expect study to hold a great place in the plan of education which crowns the *Études de la Nature*, the object of which is to expel all evil sentiments from the hearts of the French people. To begin with, Saint-Pierre abolishes learning from the education of women, of whom he only purposes to make housekeepers and mistresses. Love is their only end upon earth, the sole reason of their existence, and experience has proved that learning does not help them in this : "Those who have been learned, have almost all been unhappy in love, from Sappho to Christina, Queen of Sweden." It is not with theology and philosophy that they gain a man's affection, it is by all their feminine seductions, and it is with cookery that they keep it. "A man does not like to find a rival or an instructor in his wife." A husband likes good pastry when he is well, and good herb-tea when he is ill. He likes his coffee to be good, preserves in which "the juice is as clear as the flash of a ruby," flowers preserved in sugar which "display more brilliant colours than the amethyst in the rocks of Golconda." He likes his dining-room to be well

lighted, the fishing expedition well organised. Look at Cleopatra: it was with her talents as mistress of the house that she subjugated Antony, and made him forget "the virtuous Octavia, who was as beautiful as the Queen of Egypt, but who as a Roman dame had neglected all the homely womanly arts, to occupy herself with affairs of state." Let us beware of turning our daughters into Octavias. They are to have no books; the best are of no use to them. No theatres. Give them a dancing master, a singing master, let them learn needlework and the science of housekeeping; nothing more is necessary to a young girl in the interest of her own happiness. It is thus that united families are prepared, where contentment engenders goodness and makes virtue easy.¹

Boys are to leave classical studies alone, as they only delay at a dead loss their entry into life. Seven years of humanities, two of philosophy, three of theology; twelve years of weariness, ambition, and self-conceit. . . . "I ask if, after going through that, a schoolboy, following the denominations of these same studies, is more

¹ Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had developed his ideas upon the education of women, long before the publication of the *Études de la Nature*, in a speech delivered in 1777, without success, at an academical meeting in the country. Some of the details given here are borrowed from this *Discours sur l'Éducation des femmes*.

human, more philosophical, and believes more in God than a good peasant who does not know how to read? Of what use is it all to most men?" A boy ought to have finished his studies and begun a trade at sixteen. Up to then he is to study according to a programme which has made good its way in the world since, and for which Bernardin de Saint-Pierre merits a second time the title of pioneer. These boys were to learn nothing but useful things—arithmetic, geometry, physics, mechanics, agriculture, the art of making bread and weaving cloth, how to build a house and decorate it. A very careful civil education. It is generally forgotten that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre is the inventor of school-drill. It was one of his favourite ideas; he even wished the little school-boys to undertake the grand manœuvres.

"During the summer, when the harvest is gathered in, towards the beginning of September, I should take them into the country in battalions, divided under several flags. I should give them a picture of war. I should let them sleep on the grass in the shadow of the woods, where they should prepare their food themselves, and learn to defend and attack a post, swim a river, exercise themselves in the use of firearms, and at the same time in manœuvres taken from the tactics of the Greeks, who are our superiors in almost everything."

A little Greek and Latin they might learn during their last years at school, but taught "by use," without grammar ; lessons learnt by heart, or written exercises ; a little law, something of politics, some ideas upon the history of religion ; but no abstract speculations or researches, even in science.

One did not expect to meet so utilitarian a Bernadin de Saint-Pierre. In a hundred years we have not got beyond him, and yet we know whether our generation prides itself upon its contempt of the schools or not. The wonder is that he found means to retain his Louis XVI. sentimentalism in spite of this overflow of practical ideas. He corrected with one stroke of his pen the dryness of his programme. Everything which was to be taught in his *Écoles de la Patrie* — orthography, ethics, arithmetic, baking—all, without exception, were to be "put into verse and set to music." Out of school-hours the pupils were to be commanded by "the sound of flutes, hautbois, and bagpipes." Here we find ourselves again in the land of Utopia, and we recognise our Bernardin.

The schemes of political and social reforms which fill the two last volumes of the *Études de la Nature* are full of this curious mixture of a practical mind with a romantic imagination. Saint-Pierre is a democrat, and rather an

advanced one for the day for which he was writing. He works with all his might to disturb the existing state of things, and the end is always simply a dream. You have the impression that in his regenerated state the most serious questions would be "put into verse and set to music," like the course of geometry in his model school. He asks for the suppression of large estates and great capitalists, monopolies, privileged companies, the rights of taxation. He proposes several means of putting down the nobility, whose existence would not fail in the long run to bring about the downfall and ruin of the State. He demands energetically the confiscation of the property of the clergy for the good of the poor. He wishes to replace hospitals with home nursing, by which the families of the sick persons would benefit; to ameliorate prison regime and madhouses to secure pensions to aged workmen, and to construct in Paris edifices large enough to admit of fêtes for the people being held there. All at once he interrupts himself in these grave subjects to describe an *Elysium* of his invention, which will be like the visible epitome of the happy metamorphosis of France.

His Elysium is situated at Neuilly, in the island of the Grande-yatte, enlarged by the small arm of the Seine and a bit of the shore.

It is encumbered with all that the eighteenth century could invent in the way of symbols, allegories, emblems, touching combinations, and instructive conjunctions. There are nothing but obelisks, peristyles, tombs, pyramids, temples, urns, altars, trophies, busts, bas-reliefs, medallions, statues, domes, columns and colonnades, epitaphs, mottoes, maxims, complicated bowers, and "enchanted groves." There is not an object of art in it which has not a moral signification; not a pebble or blade of grass which does not give the passer-by a lesson in virtue or gratitude. Thus, for example, upon a rock placed in the midst of a tuft of strawberry-plants from Chili, one reads these words:—

"I was unknown in Europe; but in such a year, such a one, born in such a place, transplanted me from the high mountains of Chili; and now I bear flowers and fruit in the pleasant climate of France."

Under a bas-relief of coloured marble, representing small children eating, drinking, and enjoying themselves, one would read this inscription:—

"We were exposed in the streets, to the dogs, to hunger and cold; such a one, from such a place, lodged us, clothed us, and gave us the milk refused to us by our mothers."

At the foot of a statue, in white marble, of a

young and beautiful woman, seated, and wiping her eyes with symptoms of sadness and joy :—

"I was hateful in the sight of Heaven and before men ; but, touched with repentance, I appeased Heaven with my tears ; and I have repaired the evil which I did to men, by serving the sorrowful."

Not far from this repentant Magdalen, whose marble face expresses, according to the æsthetics of the day, at one and the same time joy and sadness, some statues are erected to good housewives "who shall re-establish order in an untidy house," to widows who have not re-married on account of their children, and to women "who shall have attained to the most illustrious position through the very modesty of their virtues." Further on are the busts of inventors of useful instruments, ornamented with the objects which they have invented : "the representation of a stocking-frame and that of a silk-throwing mill." As for the inventor of gunpowder, if he is ever discovered, there is no place for him in the Elysium.

Further away still, a magnificent tomb, surrounded with tobacco-plants, is consecrated to Nicot, who imported tobacco into Europe. A tuft of Lucern-grass, from Media, "surrounds with its tendrils the monument dedicated to the memory of the unknown husbandman who was

the first to sow seed on our stony hills, and to present to us pasturage which renews itself four times a year on spots which were barren." And so on for all travellers who have brought into the country useful or agreeable plants. Seeing an urn in the midst of a nasturtium bed, a pedestal among the potatoes, the people would think of their benefactors, and their hearts would be softened. They would leave the island Grande-yatte better men ; easy, too, as to their future, for this sublime spot would make the fortune of Paris. This Elysium would attract a crowd of rich foreigners, anxious to "deserve well" of France, so as to obtain the honour of being buried in the pantheon of virtuous men.

In the eyes of Bernadin de Saint-Pierre this enormous toy-fair was nothing less than "the re-establishment of one of the laws of nature most important to a nation—I would say an inexhaustible perspective of the Infinite." In the same way the reforms which have just been expounded all have for their object "the application of the laws of nature to the evils of society," and for a result the cure of these ills by the return of the "harmonious laws of nature" and the "natural affections." Unhappily for France, Saint-Pierre was not the only man who knew what he meant when he talked this jargon, without sense to us. In 1784 there was a large

number of persons who imagined that there was something in it, and that, in fact, nothing was simpler than to return to the "harmonious laws of nature." The *Études de la Nature* corresponded with a widely-diffused current of ideas, and that adds to their interest. They help to represent to us the condition of many minds at the beginning of the Revolution. At that time they thought to overthrow everything to the sound of the bagpipes, and they believed in the panacea of Elysiums.

We have sketched the general plan of the work ; it now remains to point out some of the ideas "by the way," which are its chief riches. The author strongly suspected that he was never more interesting than when he gave loose rein to his pen, and he never refused himself a digression or fancy. "Descriptions, conjectures, insight, views, objections, doubts, and even my errors," he says in his "Plan of Work," "I collected them all." He did well ; for it is when he wanders from the point and forgets his system that he is original and interesting.

In Art he could not disabuse his mind of the mania for moral effect ; he does not even spare the landscape. "If one wishes to find a great deal of interest in a smiling and agreeable landscape, one must be able to see it through a great triumphal arch, ruined by time. On the con-

trary, a town full of Etruscan and Egyptian monuments looks much more antique when one sees it from under a green and flowery bower."

He is, however, much more realistic, and consequently more modern, than his description of his Elysium would lead one to suppose. He deserves to be pardoned his philosophical landscapes, because he was the first to say that there is nothing ugly in nature, one only needs to know how to look at it. Man disfigures it by his works, but that which he has not touched always retains its beauty. "The ugliest objects are agreeable when they are in the place where Nature put them." A crab or a monkey which appears to you hideous in a natural history collection, ceases to be so when you see it on the shore or in a virgin forest ; they then form an integral part of the general beauty of the landscape.

The same with people. A fig for conventional types and mythological costumes ! copy nature. Make real shoe-blacks with their black-boxes ; real nuns with their mob-caps ; real kitchens with the real milk-jug and saucepan. Make your great men look like other people, instead of representing them "like angel trumpeters at the day of judgment, hair flying, wild eyes, the muscles of the face convulsed, and their draperies floating about in the wind."

"Those are," say the painters and sculptors, "expressions of genius. But men of genius and great men are not fools. . . . The coins of Virgil, Plato, Scipio, Epaminondas, and even of Alexander, represent them with a calm, tranquil air." Show us a real Cleopatra, not "an academical face without expression, a Sabine in stature, looking robust and full of health, her large eyes cast up to heaven, wearing around her big and massive arms a serpent coiled about them like a bracelet. No, make her as Plutarch shows her to us : 'Small, vivacious, sprightly, running about the streets of Alexandria at night disguised as a market-woman, and concealed amongst some goods, being carried on Apollodore's shoulders to go and see Julius Cæsar.'"

In ethics Bernardin de Saint-Pierre warmly combats the theory of the influence of climate, race, soil, temperament and food upon the vicious or virtuous tendencies of men. It seemed to him absurd to say, like Montesquieu, that the mountain is republican, and the plain monarchic; that cold makes us conquerors, and heat slaves. That is only "a philosophical opinion . . . refuted by all historical evidence."

He attacked with the same ardour the theory of heredity which has become so widespread in our day. "I myself ask where one has ever seen inclination to vice or virtue communicated

through the blood ? ” History proves that that too is only “ a philosophical opinion,” and it is a good thing that it is so, for man would no longer be at liberty to choose between good and evil if these different doctrines were true.

It is curious to see the partisans of free-will pre-occupying themselves, more than a hundred years ago, with the theory of heredity. It is a proof that ideas float about a long time in the air in the germ-stage before they come to maturity, and are adopted into the general advance of thought. It would be as absurd to pretend that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had actually conceived the physiological law, whose consequences make him so indignant as to attribute the discoveries of Darwin to his grandfather Erasmus. It is none the less true that his generation had glimmering ideas of a number of questions which have become common-places in the second half of the nineteenth century.

With a little good will we find even in the *Études de la Nature* a kind of embryo of Hegel's theory of Contradictions. Contraries produce agreement, said Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. “ I look upon this great truth as the key to the whole of philosophy. It has been as fruitful in discoveries as this other maxim : ‘ Nothing has been made in vain.’ ” He adds : “ Every truth, except the truths of fact, is the

result of two contrary ideas. . . . If men paid attention to this law, it would put an end to most of their mistakes and their disputes; for one may say that everything being compensated by contraries, every man who affirms a simple proposition is only half right, because the contrary proposition exists equally in nature."

We have already said that he had not been happy in the field of science. It would be doing him a service to pass over in silence this part of his work, but his shade would not forgive us. He attached an enormous importance to it, and only attributed to the spirit of routine and professional jealousy the obstinacy of the learned men in taking no notice of his two chief discoveries—the origin of tides, and the elongation of the poles. We will explain them briefly. It is picturesque science if ever anything was.

The poles, says Saint-Pierre, are covered with an immense cupola of ice, "according to the experience of sailors, and also of common sense. The cupola of the north pole is about two thousand leagues in diameter, and twenty-five in height. It is covered with icicles, which are about ten leagues high. The cupola of the south pole is larger still. Each one melts alternately during half the year, according as each hemisphere is in summer or winter. The two poles are thus 'the sources of the sea, as the snow mountains are the

sources of the principal rivers.' From the sides of the poles escape currents which produce the great movements of the ocean. This granted, the flow of these currents takes its course to the middle channel of the Atlantic ocean, drawn towards the line by the diminution of waters which the sun evaporates there continually. Two contrary currents or collateral eddies are thus produced, which are in fact the tides."

Now imagine the terrestrial globe capped at the two poles with these formidable glaciers, beside which Mont Blanc is only a mole-hill. The globe is necessarily oval in form. "In truth some celebrated academicians have laid down as a principle that the earth is flattened at the poles."¹ According to them "the curve of the earth is more sudden towards the equator in the sense north and south, because the degrees are there smaller ; and the earth, on the contrary, is flatter towards the poles because the degrees are larger there."

Note that it is not only "celebrated academicians," but all the astronomers, all the geographers every one having some notions of geometry, who conclude, from the increase in length of the

¹ The celebrated academician to whom allusion is made in this passage is Pierre Bouguer, who took part in the scientific expedition sent to the equator in 1736 to determine the shape of the earth. The quotation which follows is taken from his *Traité de la Navigation*, Book II., Chap. xiv.

degrees of the equator, that the earth is flat at the poles. But from these same measurements, of which he does not dispute the accuracy, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre draws an absolutely contrary conclusion. Here is an abridgment of his demonstration. "If one placed a degree of the meridian of the polar circle upon a degree of the same meridian at the equator, the first degree would exceed the second according to the experiments of the academicians. Consequently if one placed the whole arc of the meridian which crowns the polar circle, and which is forty-seven degrees, upon an arc forty-seven degrees of the same meridian near the equator, it would produce a considerable enlargement there, because its degrees are larger. . . . As the degrees of the polar curve are, on the contrary, larger than those of an arc of the circle, the entire curve must be as extensive as an arc of the circle ; now it cannot be more extensive than by supposing it more enlarged and circumscribed at this arc ; consequently the polar curve forms an elongated ellipsis."

If there happens to be amongst my readers a graduate of science, the defects of this reasoning must be obvious to him. Saint-Pierre implicitly believes that the two verticles whose angle forms a degree meet in the centre of the earth, which would be true if the earth was a

perfect sphere, but which is not so at all if it is flat at the poles, as all the world admits it to be, or if it is elongated, as he maintains. He was apparently unaware that the curve of a contour at a certain point is defined according to the radius of the circle of curvature at that point, and that the curve is greater than the radius, and consequently the degree of the circle of curvature is smaller. The smallness of the degrees at the equator is, then, a proof that the curve is larger there, or, what comes to the same thing, that the earth is flat at the poles. His strange mistake proves that his scientific equipment was limited to the most elementary knowledge of geometry, which makes his audacity in continually going to war against "the celebrated academicians," against Newton, and every scholar whose works thwarted his poetical ideas about the universe, very characteristic. It is the indication of a strong dash of infatuation, to which is joined an equally large dash of obstinacy. He never admits that he might have been mistaken. He fought all his life for his theory about the tides and his elongation of the poles. He judged of men by their manner of speaking of it, or being silent ; it was for him the touchstone of character no less than of the intelligence. Whosoever expressed an objection to it was an ignoramus or a fool, if he was not malicious. Whosoever

said nothing was a vulgar pedant, an abject flatterer, one of those servile creatures who "only flatter accredited systems by which one gains pensions." (Letter to Duval, December 23, 1785.) All the French scholars had the misfortune to place themselves in one of these positions, and many sharp words were the consequence.

Bernardin is not the first or the last writer who has mistaken his real vocation. His was neither science, nor philosophy, nor teaching. It was the love of the fields, the profound feeling and passion for this living and changing spectacle which we call a landscape. The design of his work impelled him to abandon himself to his adoration. He lost himself in it, and the result was a book which, when it appeared, was unique. From end to end it is nothing but descriptions; of the tropics, of Russia, of the Island of Malta, of Normandy, and of the environs of Paris. His travels had taught him to observe. The hurricane in the Indian Ocean, and the aurora borealis of Finland had made him more sensitive than ever to the sweetness of French scenery, to the charm of a bit of meadow, or a hedge in flower. He is, besides, much more sure of himself than in the beginning, much more capable of depicting whatever struck his fancy. His powers did not betray him any more as they had done in the *Voyage to the Isle of France*. There is an end of

general descriptions and abstract epithets ; at the first glance we are made to distinguish the characteristic of each tree, each tuft of grass, the colour of every stone, and of merging those particular and manifold impressions in a general impression. Here, for example, is a scene in Normandy, taken from the first *étude*, into which enter only "localities, animals, and vegetables of the commonest kind in our climate." It has all the air of having been destined by the author to instruct those persons who do not admire anything less than the Bay of Naples. In any case it was a revelation in the way of a landscape, taken no matter whence, and of the colours which the French language even then offered to its painters in prose and verse.

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre supposes himself to be upon "the most barren spot, a rock at the mouth of a river," and to be at liberty to ornament it with plants suitable to such a soil. These plants spring to life under his pen, and one sees them overrun this miserable corner of earth until its bareness disappears under a glorious mantle of vegetation in all sorts of brilliant and soft tints. "That on the side towards the sea the waves shall cover with foam, its rocks clad with wrack, fucus, and seaweed of all colours and all forms—green, brown, purple, in tufts and garlands, as I have seen

it in Normandy, on crags of marl, detached from its cliffs by the sea; that on the side towards the river one shall see on the yellow sand, fine turf mixed with clover, and here and there some tufts of marine wormwood. Let us plant there some willows, not like those of our meadows, but with their natural growth—let us not forget the harmony of the different ages—that we may have some of these willows smooth and succulent, shooting their young branches into the air, and others very old, whose drooping branches form cavernous bowers; let us add to these their auxiliary plants, such as green mosses and golden-tinted lichens, which variegate their grey bark, and a few of those convolvuli called lady's smocks, which like to climb round the trunk and adorn the branches that have no apparent flowers with their heart-shaped leaves and bell-shaped flowers, white as snow. Let us also place there the animal life natural to the willow and its plants—the flies, beetles, and other insects, with the winged creatures who do battle with them, such as the aquatic dragon-flies, gleaming like burnished steel, who catch them in the air, the water-wagtails who, with their tails cocked, pursue them to earth, and the kingfishers who lie in wait for them at the water's edge."

Here we have the rock quite covered with

a thousand different tints, and yet remark that Saint-Pierre has only given us one kind of tree. Let us finish the picture. "Contrast with the willow the alder, which like it grows on the banks of rivers, and which by its form, resembling a turret, its broad leaves, its dusky green colour, its fleshy roots, like cords running along the banks and binding up the soil, differs in every way from the thick mass, the light-green foliage, grey underneath, and the taproots of the willow ; add to this the plants of different ages which cling to the alder, like so many obaliskues of greenery, with their parasites, such as the maidenhair fern, shining out like a star on its humid trunk, the long hart's-tongue fern hanging down from its branches, and the other accessories of insects, birds, and even quadrupeds, which probably contrast in form, in colour, in manner and instincts with those of the willow."

The picture is now complete as regards form and colour, but how much is wanting to it still ! First of all the *flash of light*. We light up our rock with the "first flush of dawn," and we see at the same time strong shadows and transparent ones thrown upon the grass, and dark and silvery green shades flung upon the blue of the heavens, and reflected in the water. Now we will put life into it. "Let us imagine here

what neither painting nor poetry can render—the odour of the herbs, even that of the sea, the trembling of the leaves, the humming of the insects, the morning song of the birds, the rumbling, hollow murmurs, alternated with the silence of the billows which break on the shore, and the repetitions that the echoes make of all these sounds in the distance, as they lose themselves in the sea and seem like the voices of the nereids." Now it is finished, and if you do not breathe the salt air, do not feel yourself surrounded by the universal life, before this medley of changing colours and variable forms, this rustling, mumuring, roaring, it must be that the feeling for nature is not awakened in you—you are before Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's day, and the nineteenth century has passed in vain for you.

Perhaps we see better still the indefatigable activity of nature in the *Jardin abandonné*. It is a French garden, with straight, trimmed walks, symmetrical flower-beds, regular fountains, and mythological statues. A country house stands in the midst of it. The hand of man has been withdrawn from this place, once so well cared for, and it becomes what the general life of earth chooses to make of it. It is soon done. "The ponds become swamps; the hedges of yoke-elm look ragged; all the arbours

are choked up, and all the avenues overgrown. The vegetation natural to the soil declares war against the foreign vegetation; the starry thistles, and the vigorous mullein choke the English turf with their large leaves; thick masses of coarse grass and clover crowd round the judas trees; dog rose-briers climb upon them with their thorny brambles, as though they were going to take them by assault; tufts of nettles take possession of the naiad's urn, and forests of reeds of Vulcan's forges; greenish patches of moss cover the faces of the Venuses, without respect for their beauty. Even the trees besiege the house; wild cherry trees, elms, and maples rise to the roof, thrusting their long taproots into its raised parapet, finally taking command of its proud cupulas." In the eyes of a passer-by this is merely a ruin; in Bernardin's it is the re-establishment of order and beauty. Man appears to him nowhere so mischievous as when he alters the landscape.

His descriptions of foreign countries had a very great success and a great influence. As his first book was not much read, it is through the second that he has been the father of exoticism in French literature. Chateaubriand found his path prepared when he wrote *Atala*. Another had already revealed the virgin forest, dazzled the

eyes with tropical colouring, and amused the mind with strange types and costumes. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre carried the taste for exoticism to childishness, as we do in our day, and he it was who invented exhibitions of savages and semi-savages. He dreamed of drawing to Paris Indians with their canoes, caravans of Arabs mounted on camels and bullocks, Laplanders in their reindeer sledges, Africans and Asiatics. "What a delight for us," he said, "to take part in their joy, to see their dances in our public squares, and to hear the drums of the Tartars, and the ivory horns of the negroes, resounding around the statues of our kings."

To sum up, the *Études de la Nature* is a beautiful prose poem upon a bad philosophical thesis. In Bernardin de Saint-Pierre Providence had a compromising advocate, which happens, however, pretty often. Not content with dragging the final causes into everything, he gave them such a royal following of false ideas and scientific errors, that the reading of his book becomes in places irksome. In order to find pleasure in it to-day we must follow his advice, throw away reason and give ourselves up entirely to feeling. In such a case it is impossible not to be touched with this effort to recall man to the thought of the Infinite,

or not to let oneself be seduced by the charm of the advocate. As soon as we have given up disputing with the author on fundamental grounds, we are filled with pleasure at his sincere enthusiasm, the wealth of his sensations and their quite modern subtilty. He is himself as though intoxicated by the vividness of his impressions. By the strength of his love for nature he confounds it with the Divinity, and adores the works instead of the Author of them. He speaks of nature with a tenderness which communicates itself to his writing and wins over his reader. He wished to re-open the door to Providence, he re-opened it to the great god Pan; a result which was not worth the other, no doubt, but which has had immense consequences in our century.

CHAPTER IV.

“ PAUL AND VIRGINIA.”

BEFORE the appearance of the *Études de la Nature*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was a poor devil, in want, and little known outside one or two salons, where he was not liked, and with reason. He quite counted upon his work not passing unnoticed. “I dare say that I shall astonish you,” he wrote to Hennin, before going to print, when announcing his intention of reading a fragment of his MS. to him ; but it is doubtful whether he expected to make a noise in the world. He had said what he wished to say, but not in the manner which he had dreamed of. His language appeared to him poor, in spite of his efforts to vary his vocabulary. “The new career which I have adopted,” he said, “has not furnished me with new expressions ; I have often to repeat the same. But notwithstanding its defects, which spring from the incapacity of the workman, I

dare to affirm that the basis of my work is calculated to throw a great light on every part of nature, and to overthrow the methods which are employed to study it. What a fertile subject it would be in happier hands." (Letter to Hennin, December 25, 1783.) For himself the *Études de la Nature* was valuable because of the ideas in it; the form they took was of less importance—a judgment which appears very singular to us in our day.

There is as much astonishment as pleasure in the first letters where he tells his old friend of the enthusiastic reception given to his book by the public. "I receive letters in which I am exalted far above my merits; I really must have done something quite out of the common. I have, however, but touched upon the shadows of the reality. It is but a trifle, the work of a man" (March 1, 1785). Three days later: "I receive . . . private letters from persons with whom I have no connection, but which praise me too much to allow of my showing them to any one." The applause grew, reached the provinces, and became formidable. As is usual, the author quickly got accustomed to it, and soon learnt to speak with complaisance of the shower of visits, letters, and invitations to dinner which descended upon his garret. "An old friend of Jean-Jacques and D'Alembert came

to express all sorts of affection and interest in me, and wished actually to carry me off to his country house. He appeared to have been particularly struck with what I have said about plants. Painters are enraptured with what I have said about the arts ; others upon education ; and yet more on the causes of the tides " (March 20, 1785). "It seems that my book makes a great sensation amongst the clergy ; a grand vicar of Soissons, named M. l'Abbé de Montmignon, came to see me four or five times, and begged me to accept a lodging with him in his country house, so that I might satisfy my taste for the fields. I told him that in truth I did wish for a country house, but not other people's. . . . Another grand vicar of Agde, called M. l'Abbé de Bysants, came to see me, . . . and is going to take me next Wednesday to visit the Archbishop of Aix, who wishes to see me in order to speak of me at the convocation of the clergy. . . . There are five or six great dinners that I have refused during the last eight days" (April 25). "Sentimental people send me letters full of enthusiasm ; from women I get receipts for my ailments ; rich men offer me dinners ; gentlemen of property country houses ; authors their works ; men of the world their influence, their patronage, and even money. I find in all that but the

simple testimony of their good will" (June 3).

He is discreet; he keeps to himself the declarations of love by which a man knows at once that he is become celebrated. None of them escapes it, let him be writer, statesman, or tenor, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre received his share like the rest. One of the first came from a young Swiss lady of Lausanne, whose letter is a jewel of artless simplicity. She writes to him that she is young, beautiful, and rich; that she offers him her hand, with her mother's sanction, but that being a protestant, she does not wish to marry a Roman Catholic; she continues, "I wish to have a husband who will love only me, and who will always love me. He must believe in God, and must serve Him in the same way that I do; . . . I would not be your wife unless we are to work out our salvation together." He replied evasively: "I think as you do, and to love, Eternity does not seem to me too long. But before all people must know one another, and see one another in the world." His young correspondent found the reply too vague, and sent a friend of hers to M. de Saint-Pierre to ask him whether or not he would become a convert. The ambassador was pressing: "You have said that the birds sing their hymns, each one in his own

language, and that all these hymns are acceptable in the sight of God ; therefore you will become protestant and marry my friend." M. de Saint-Pierre contended : " I have never said that a nightingale ought to sing like a black-bird, I shall therefore neither change my religion nor my song." The negotiation ended there.

Another suit was pressed upon him by an abbé. The letter began with reproaches upon the pride of which M. de Saint-Pierre had given proof on several occasions, and continued in these terms : " My niece is a very amiable young lady, as artless as innocence itself, pure as a beautiful spring day, of noble stature, happy countenance . . . (we abridge), and above all, of the best disposition." This niece being only seventeen, her husband would receive her " straight from the hand of nature, before society had moulded her to its methods," which is certainly the duty of the author of the *Études de la Nature*. The lady has not a penny, but that would evidently not deter the author of the *Études*. " We believe," wrote her uncle, " you, she, and I, in Providence." We have not got Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's reply, but he did not marry this time either.

He refused with the same prudence invitations to go and stay with people in the country. " Benevolence," he said wittily, " is the flower,

of friendship, and its perfume lasts as long as one leaves it on its stem, without plucking it."

He tried to reply to his letters, but had to give up the attempt; they came now from the whole of Europe. Very soon he was compelled to refuse them at the post office, for they did not frank them at that time. He paid upwards of £80 for postage of letters in one year, saw that glory costs too much, and from that time made a selection of his letters.

At last, joy of joys! the Queen Marie Antoinette mentioned the *Études de la Nature* at a dinner at Mme. de Polignac's, and Mme. de Genlis took the princes, her pupils, to visit the author, the lion of the day, in his hermitage.

The reasons of this triumph are easily explained. The influence of Rousseau, which was always growing, had a good deal to do with it. People only asked to be sentimental, to believe in natural laws, to make the social organisation responsible for all their ills. Many of them, too, only asked to rest from the aggressive and dry irreligion in which they had lived for so long. All the tender souls for whom scepticism is never anything but a passing mood, hailed with joy the religious reaction of which the *Études de la Nature* gave the signal. This was one of the two principal reasons of its enormous success. The other great reason was that people were

beginning to read the *Confessions* and the *Reveries*, just published at Geneva, and that men's minds were open to poetry, of which they had been for many generations deprived. Poetry was the thing most wanting in France at the end of the eighteenth century, and was most in need of being revived. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was a poet, and he brought them a new poetry that became popular in a few weeks. As to his false science, it only irritated the scientists. The great public was at that time very ignorant on all scientific subjects, and quite ready to judge by sentiment of the origin of volcanoes and the form of the poles. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's theories found zealous partisans, and seven months had not passed when a candidate at the Sorbonne presented a thesis in which he compared the *Études de la Nature* to Buffon's *Époques de la Nature*, which was a great enemy to final causes, as we know, and held the natural man to be a simple brute.

Meantime the object of so much praise remained poor. Imitations of his book appeared on all sides, and took from him the best of his profits. "Hardly have I gathered a few sheaves," he wrote on the 6th of July, 1785, "than the rats enter my granary." Besides that he worked hard to pay his debts, which were many. That is why he begged just as

before, pensions from the king, and gratuities from the ministers. The habit was formed, as often happens to men who have had a needy youth.

His first savings (he made them in spite of everything, and that is what makes it difficult to excuse him this time) were devoted to buying a cottage and garden in an obscure part of the town, amongst low, miserable surroundings. His street was not paved, and he said gaily about it: "Perhaps if my work continues to bring me so many visitors, the carriage-folk will employ their influence at least to have it cleaned for me." The ragged neighbours did not frighten him. "When I came to live amongst the poor in this part of the town," he replied to remarks, "I took my place amongst the class to which I have belonged for some time. Everything gave way to the happiness of having a corner of land to dig and mess about in. Hardly established in it, the naïve pride of the householder bursts forth in his letters. He had paid for house and garden £200, and one would think, in reading what he writes of it, that he possessed an extensive park. He has "an orchard, some vines," and a large space for flowers. He writes to ask his friends to give him seeds, bulbs, and plants; one would imagine that all the species

of both hemispheres would not suffice to fill his garden. As soon as his innocent mania is known, they send him from all sides enough to fill the parterres of Versailles, but he still finds so much room that he sows a patch of vegetables.

With all that he is sad and ill, the reaction has been too great. He writes to Duval: "I have experienced a succession of such vexatious events . . . that I may say the depths of my soul have been shaken by them." (January 7, 1787). To some one who congratulates him on his success, he replies: "You only see the flower, the thorn has remained in my nerves." Little by little he calmed down, recovered himself, and gained enough courage to dispute the genuineness of the judgment of the noble tribunal, which had once condemned one part of his work. A fourth volume of the *Études de la Nature* appeared in 1788. It contained *Paul and Virginia*.

The introduction to *Paul and Virginia* clearly explains the intention of the author. "I had great designs in this little work. I tried to depict in it a different soil and vegetation to those of Europe. Our poets have too long allowed their lovers to repose upon the banks of streams, in the meadows, and under the foliage of the beech-trees. I wished to place

mine on the seashore, at the foot of the rocks, in the shadow of the cocoa-nut palms, bananas, and flowering lemon-trees. It only needs, at the other side of the world, a Theocritus, or a Virgil, to give us pictures, at least as interesting as those of our country." The ambition to be the Theocritus and Virgil of the tropics, comes out in all that he had hitherto written, but he wished for something more in his romance, and what follows makes one bless the insubordination of genius, which goes on its way laughing at the best made plans. "I also proposed to myself to bring forward in it several great truths; amongst others this one, that our happiness consists in living according to nature and virtue." A later edition is still more explicit: "This little work is but a relaxation from my *Études de la Nature*, and the application which I have made of its laws to the happiness of two unhappy families." In other words, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre meant *Paul and Virginia* to be an instructive and useful romance, a sort of lesson in things intended to prove the justice of the theories developed in his *Études de la Nature*, and the wisdom of the reforms which he there set forth. His young hero and heroine were to be the living and striking demonstration of the natural goodness of man, of the uselessness of our vain sciences, and of an infinite

number of other "great truths" propounded in the course of his work. Happily the poet was often able to make the philosopher forget his programme.

It is the poet, the Theocritus of the tropics, who begins. He sings of a voluptuous nature that squanders her caresses upon two nurslings. She lulls them to the murmur of the springs, and smiles upon them in a thousand brilliant colours. Around their cradle is only warmth and perfume. They develop harmoniously in this solitude, whose gentle influences are in accord with the gentleness of the sentiments placed by Providence in the hearts of the newly-born. Nothing could be more charming than these two beautiful children, "quite naked, according to the custom of the country, hardly able to walk, holding each other by the hand and under the arms, as we represent the twins in the zodiac. Night even could not separate them, they were often found in the same cradle, cheek to cheek, breast to breast, the hands of each round the other's neck, asleep in each other's arms." These last lines are exquisite; it would be impossible better to express the ineffable graces of the sleep of childhood.

Paul and Virginia grew up, and their games and little adventures are recounted with the same charm. It is not high art, it is too pretty,

could be too easily turned into a ballad, or used to decorate a chocolate box, but it is delightful all the same. Besides, the beauty of some of the pictures is considerably heightened by their frames ; for instance, the two children performing pantomines " like the negroes." " The place generally chosen for the scenes was the cross-roads of a forest, whose glades formed around us several arcades of foliage. In their midst we were sheltered from the heat during the whole day ; but when the sun had sunk to the horizon, its rays, broken by the trunks of the trees, were divided *among the shadows of the forest into long luminous beams*, which produced the most majestic effect. Sometimes his whole disc would appear at the end of one of the avenues, making it sparkle with light. The foliage of the trees, lighted from below with the sun's saffron-tinted rays, shone with the glow of the topaz and the emerald. Their trunks, mossy and brown, seemed to be changed into columns of antique bronze ; and the birds already gone to rest in silence under the dark leaves, there to pass the night, surprised by the vision of a second dawn, would salute altogether the star of the day with a thousand songs." How beautiful and true all this is. This sudden illumination of a great forest from below by the setting sun, is as real as it is dazzling. One understands

how scenes like that astonished a generation brought up upon the *Fastes* of Lemierre and the *Jardins* of Delille.

The infancy of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's young hero and heroine is passed entirely in a desert, far from all society ; and in them can be verified the statement made in the *Études de la Nature*, that “man is born good.” They only possess virtuous instincts, good feelings, and not a germ of vice, for these germs are only communicated to us from without, nature did not place them in us.

Before going further we would remark once again how anti-Christian these ideas are. The necessity for the Redemption disappears with original sin, and Christianity altogether is only a superfluity, if not perhaps even charlatanism. Faith must certainly have been very weak, when the author of these heresies received from religious people a rapturous welcome, and from the Church of Rome so benignant a reception, that the philosophers accused him of being in the pay of the clergy. Godless ages very soon reach a point where they lose their sense of religion. Then there comes a general atmosphere of ignorance and want of intelligence of sacred things, from which Christians who have retained their belief also suffer ; they accustom themselves to be too inexacting, and not to look too closely into things.

The moment arrives to educate the two children, and to demonstrate what is also said in the *Études de la Nature* that, "it is society which makes evil doers, and it is our education which prepares them." The philosopher here interrupts the poet, and explains his system. Paul and Virginia are not "prepared" to become wicked, because they are brought up far from schools and libraries, without any other teacher but nature. "All their study was to take delight in and help one another. For the rest they were as ignorant as creoles, and did not know how to read or write. They did not disturb themselves about what had happened in remote times, far from them; their curiosity did not extend beyond their mountain. They believed that the world ended where their island did, and they never imagined anything pleasant where they were not. Their affection for each other and for their mothers, occupied all the activity of their souls. Useless sciences had never made their tears flow; lessons of sad morality had never filled them with weariness. They did not know that they must not steal, for they had all things in common; nor that they must not be intemperate, for they had as much as they liked of simple food; nor that they must not lie, having nothing to hide. No one had ever frightened them by telling them that God

reserves terrible punishments for ungrateful children ; with them filial love was born of maternal love." Daphnis and Chloe had less innocent souls, less pure from all human teaching ; they knew how to read, and, having flocks to mind, they had, at least, been taught that thieves exist.

An education so adapted to scandalise the Academies naturally produced the happiest results. At twelve Paul was "more robust and more intelligent than Europeans of fifteen." He had more "enlightenment." Virginia was no less superior to the girls of our countries. For all that they had no clocks, almanacs, or books of chronology, history, and philosophy, they were not ignorant, except to our pedantic ideas, as they possessed the knowledge which the country teaches us. "They knew the hours of the day by the shadows of the trees, the seasons by the time which gave them their flowers and their fruits, and the year by the number of their harvests." They knew the names and characteristics of all the plants and birds, and of everything which had life in their valley and its environs. They knew how to make everything necessary to the life of a man in the country, and they accomplished all these works with the good temper which comes from health, open air, and the absence of care. Seeing them

so skilful, ingenious, and happy, their mothers congratulated themselves on having been "compelled by misfortune to return to nature."

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre foresaw that people might make some objections, and he hastened to be beforehand with them. "You Europeans, whose souls are filled from infancy with so many prejudices contrary to happiness, cannot understand that nature could give so much sagacity, judgment, and pleasure. Your souls, circumscribed by a small sphere of human knowledge, soon reach the limit of their artificial pleasures, but nature and the heart are inexhaustible." . . . After all, what need had these young people to be rich and learned in our manner? their wants and their ignorance added still more to their happiness. There was not a day in which they did not impart to each other some help or some information, ay, real information; and if some errors were mixed up in it a pure man has no dangerous ones to fear."

There is a touch of declamation about this apostrophe. It threatens to become a little dull, when the poet awakes, and carries us with a flap of his wings above all theories and systems. The poet only knows one thing: his hero and heroine are beautiful, loving, tender, at an age to love, let them love therefore. All else is forgotten, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in his

turn writes, like so many others, the everlasting romance of sweet fifteen. He writes it with chastity and fire, with a pure pen, but with deep and stirring passion. Genius just touched him with its breath for the first and last time, and he writes some pages of lofty conception such as mere talent however great cannot reach.

“Nevertheless for some time Virginia was agitated by an unknown trouble. Her beautiful blue eyes had black circles under them ; her complexion became yellow, and a great languor took possession of her. Serenity was no longer on her brow, nor a smile upon her lips. They saw her all at once gay without joy, and sad without sorrow. She shunned her innocent sports, her pleasant labours, and the society of her beloved family. She wandered hither and thither in the most lonely parts of the homestead, everywhere seeking repose and finding none. . . . Sometimes at sight of Paul she would go towards him gaily, then all at once on getting near to him, a sudden embarrassment would seize her, a vivid blush would dye her pale cheeks, and her eyes would not dare to meet his. Paul would say to her, ‘ These rocks are covered with verdure ; our birds sing when they see thee ; everything around thee is gay, thou only art sad,’ and he would try to cheer her by embracing her, but she would turn away her

head and fly trembling towards her mother. The unhappy girl felt herself troubled by the caresses of her brother. Paul could not understand such new and strange caprices."

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had so absolutely lost sight of his systems, that he gives to Virginia the refined modesty which is only generated in creatures complicated by civilisation. "Children of Nature" are ignorant of these shy reserves which do not occur at all without a certain amount of knowledge. Longus is much more to the point when he depicts the amorous Chloe kissing her Daphnis with all her heart, and without thinking of any harm, as a "simple girl brought up in the country, and never having in her life heard even the name of love."

A terrible summer came to increase the mysterious trouble from which Virginia suffered. "It was towards the end of December when the sun in Capricorn, for weeks burns the Isle of France with its vertical rays. The south wind which prevails there nearly the whole year, blew no longer. Great clouds of dust rose upon the roads and remained suspended in the air. The earth cracked in all directions; the grass was burnt; warm exhalations issued from the sides of the mountains, and most of the brooks were dried up. Not a cloud came from

the side of the sea, only during the day a ruddy vapour would rise from its plains, appearing at sunset like the blaze of a conflagration. Night even brought no coolness to the heated atmosphere. The moon, quite red, rose in the misty horizon with extraordinary grandeur. The flocks, prostrate upon the hill-sides, inhaling the air, made the valleys echo with their sad bleatings. Even the Kafir tending them lay upon the earth to find some coolness there ; but everywhere the ground was burning, and the stifling air resounded with the hum of insects, trying to quench their thirst in the blood of men and animals."

The drama now develops itself in strict accordance with these exterior sensations. "On one of those sultry nights Virginia felt all the symptoms of her malady redoubled. She rose, sat up, lay down again, not finding in any attitude sleep or repose. By the light of the moon she directed her steps towards the spring. She could see its source which, in spite of the drought, still flowed like a silver thread along the brown surface of the rock. She plunged into its trough, and at first the coolness revived her, and a thousand agreeable recollections presented themselves to her mind. She remembered that in her infancy her mother and Marguerite amused themselves by bathing her

with Paul in this same place ; that Paul afterwards, reserving this bath for her, had hollowed it out, covered the bottom with sand, and sown on its margin aromatic herbs. She caught a glimpse in the water on her bare arms and bosom of the reflections of two palm-trees, planted at her own and her brother's birth, which interlaced their green branches and young cocoa-nuts above her head. She thought of Paul's friendship, sweeter than perfume, purer than the waters of the springs, stronger than the united palm-trees, and she sighed. She thought of the night, of solitude ; and a devouring fire took possession of her. She rose at once, afraid of these dangerous shadows, and these waters more burning than the suns of the Torrid Zone. She ran to her mother to seek protection from herself. Several times, wishing to tell her her sufferings, she took her hands between her own, several times she was near breathing Paul's name, but her oppressed heart left her tongue without speech, and laying her head on her mother's breast she could only burst into floods of tears."

A tempest ravages their valley and destroys their garden, leaving however after it a feeling of peace and repose. Virginia restored, becomes once more familiar and affectionate with Paul, but it is only a flash of light in the darkness,

which disappears with the expansion of nerves produced by the cool damp air.

Already while his hero and heroine were but infants, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre showed us how nature, even at that early age, mingled in their pleasures and needs, so that “their life seemed one with that of the trees, like the fauns and hamadryads.” Now it is in their passions that nature takes part, and with what intensity the scene of the bath, and the return of intimacy after the storm show us vividly. The author profits by the characters he has in hand to realise a conception already old, and establish a bond, henceforth indissoluble, between the human soul and its surroundings. The bond existed before his time; it is as old as the world and it acts, without their knowledge, upon the most uncultured beings. But in the age and surroundings where men have learnt to recognise it, to be conscious of it, it requires so much strength and importance that we may be allowed to welcome it as a new force. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre pointed it out, showed it at work, and the lesson was not lost. Chateaubriand was twenty at the time of the appearance of *Paul and Virginia*. When his René cries out amidst the whistling of the wind, “Be swift to gather ye tempests that I have longed for,” he does not know whether he is speaking of real storms or of those

in his soul. He confounds them, and no one is unaware how much poetical inspiration has been given to our age by this confusion between our feelings and external impressions.

Let us remark in passing that it was not worth while being so indignant in the *Études de la Nature* against those who dared to say that morals vary with the climate. The fragments which we have just read bring us to exactly the same conclusion.

It is also a landscape which prepares us, if I may so express it, for the scene of the love-confession, when after the episode of the letter which calls Virginia away to France, the two young people go out after supper to spend their last evening together. They seat themselves upon a hillock and at first remain absolutely silent.

It was one of those delicious nights so common in the tropics, whose beauty no brush however skilful can paint. The moon appeared in the midst of the firmament, surrounded with a curtain of clouds which were gradually dispersed by her rays. Her light spread by degrees over the mountains of the island, and over their highest peaks which shone with silvery green. The winds held their breath. One heard in the woods, in the depths of the valleys, and on the rocky heights, little cries,

soft murmurs of birds billing and cooing in their nests, happy in the moonlight and the tranquility of the air. On the ground everything seemed to be stirring, even the insects.

The night seemed to breathe of love: an intoxicating languor stole over the two lovers, and they spoke at last and confessed their secret. Paul's speech is a little too set, the phrases too smooth, too careful. Virginia's reply is full of passion and impulse, even when we abridge it, and only retain the cry at the end: “Oh, Paul, Paul! thou art much dearer to me than a brother! How much has it not cost me to hold thee at a distance! . . . Now whether I remain or go, live or die, do with me as thou wilt. . . .” At these words Paul clasped her in his arms.

Virginia departs, and with her goes the inspiration. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre seems to be filled with remorse for having lingered over trifles which have taught us nothing, unless it is that love belongs to the number of “natural laws” which govern our earth (we ourselves rather question it). He tries to make up for lost time, and succeeds only too well, for until the final catastrophe, we never cease to be taught, and to verify the truth of the ideas propounded in the *Études de la Nature*. Paul learns to read and write so as to be able to correspond

with Virginia, and he loses at once his tranquility of mind. What he learns from romances makes him uneasy and jealous: "His knowledge already makes him unhappy." He talks sometimes with the other inhabitants, but their slander, their vain gossip are so many more causes of sorrow; why was he so imprudent as to leave his desert? "Solitude restores man in part to natural happiness, by keeping from him social unhappiness."

He becomes ambitious, dreams of gaining "some high position" so as to be more worthy of Virginia. The old man reveals to him that all the roads are closed to those who have neither birth nor fortune. Here follows a digression upon hereditary nobility, the traffic in public offices, the indifference of the great to virtue.

Paul declares that he will attach himself to some "society." "I shall entirely adopt its spirit and its opinions," he says; "I shall make myself liked." The old man reprimands him severely for his weak desire to cling to something. Another digression upon the sacrifice of conscience demanded by societies which "besides interest themselves very little in the discovery of truth."

In despair of his cause Paul decides to be a writer. One can imagine how this is received.

The old man draws so black a picture of the persecutions which attend men of letters, that the poor boy is terrified at the thought of the sufferings which each book represents, and exclaims, embracing a tree planted by Virginia, “Ah! she who planted this papaw-tree has given the inhabitants of these forests a more useful and charming present than if she had given them a library.” Further digression upon the Gospel and the Greek philosophers.

This is the part that Mme. Necker, at the time of the famous reading in her salon, compared to “a glass of iced water.” The criticism was just. The author himself was chilled by the dialogues between Paul and the old man, and cannot regain the passion which carried him so high just before. The shipwreck of the *Saint-Géran*, and the death of Virginia, which made us all shed floods of tears when we were children, are, it must be allowed, somewhat melodramatic, and from a literary point of view very inferior to the passionate scenes.

Let us forget the didactic portions of the work, and the old preacher who is no other than Bernardin himself. There remains a love-story, one of the most passionate ever written in any language. The more one re-reads it, the less one understands how it could have been taken

for an innocent and somewhat insipid pastoral. Sainte-Beuve was surprised at it even forty years ago. "This charming little book," he writes, "which Fontanes placed a little too conventionally, perhaps, between *Telémaque* and *La Mort d'Abel* (de Gesner), I should myself place between *Daphnis and Chloe*, and that immortal fourth book in honour of Dido." Theophile Gautier declared that *Paul and Virginia* appeared to him to be the most dangerous book in the world for young imaginations. He recalls the fervid emotion which he himself felt in reading it, and which was never equalled later by any other book.¹ These two criticisms have nothing exaggerated in them. The place of Virginia with her beautiful eyes and their black circles, is in the front rank of illustrious lovers, between Chloe, passionate and simple, and the despairing Dido. Nevertheless, such is the empire of the commonplace, that by dint of being enraptured over the grace and sentiment of Bernardin's narrative, one has become accustomed more and more to see in it but a superior Berquin, and to relegate it insensibly to the literature of childhood. More than one reader was scandalised just now that we dared to speak freely of a sacred masterpiece, though he has not read *Paul*

¹ Theophile Gautier, *Souvenirs intimes*, by Mme. Judith Gautier.

and *Virginia* since the days when he bowled his hoop, and would have been much surprised if it had been proposed to him.

At the time when the book was most in favour, curiosity was rife to know how far it was a true story. The problem does not interest us to-day, except for what it teaches us about the author's manner of composition. Our realistic novelists would find little to change in it.

The framework is true. The landscapes are copied from nature and perfected by a divination as to what would be the tropical vegetation in a country more fertile than the Isle of France. “*Paul and Virginia,*” Humboldt wrote, “has accompanied me to the countries which inspired Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. I have re-read it during many years with my companion. . . . When the noonday sky shone with its pure brightness, or in rainy weather, on the shores of the Orinico, while the rolling thunderstorm illuminated the forest ; and we were struck, both of us, with the admirable truth with which, in so few pages, the powerful nature of the tropics in all their original features is represented.”

The principal characters of *Paul and Virginia*, those whom he took pains to make alive, are formed of traits borrowed from flesh and blood models, and arranged according as they were needed. We have already said that the author

put himself into the book in the character of the old man. In his heroine he has recalled two charming girls whom he had met at one time in Russia and at Berlin, Mlle. de la Tour, and Mlle. Virginie Taubenheim.

Longus furnished the primitive idea of the narrative ; the transformation of friendship into love at a fatal moment between two young people brought up together. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre also borrowed from him several points of detail ; there are in the first half of *Paul and Virginia* some passages which very closely follow *Daphnis and Chloe*.

The description of the manners of the Isle of France was exact when it was written. Reminiscences of several periods suggested the episodes. The pretty scene of the children sheltering themselves from the rain under Virginia's petticoat had been observed by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in the Faubourg Saint Marceau. The tragedy of the dénouement had been related to him ; he did not see it himself, whence it doubtless comes that it looks rather as though it had been arranged. "He only knew how to write about what he had seen," said Aimé Martin ; but what he had seen he always illustrated, and one might even give as an epigraph to *Paul and Virginia* the title which Goethe chose for his memoirs : *Poetry and Truth*.

The book was praised up to the skies the moment it appeared. It was translated into English, Italian, German, Dutch, Russian, Polish, and Spanish. Upwards of three hundred imitations were written in French. It was put into novels, plays, pictures, and popular engravings. Mothers called their newly-born children Paul or Virginia. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was decidedly a great man, and in 1791 when the National Assembly drew up a list from among which to choose a governor for the Dauphin, his name figures in it, in company with that of Berquin, of Saint-Martin, called the *unknown philosopher*, of de Sieyes and of Condorcet; a strange medley that says a good deal for the disorder which at that time reigned in men's minds.

This brilliant success was not a mere flare up. Some years later we find the Bonaparte family showing a marked enthusiasm. First there is a letter signed Louis Bonaparte, in which the author relates that he had wept so much in reading *Paul and Virginia* that he would like to know what is true in the story, “so that another time in re-reading it I can say to myself to comfort my afflicted feelings—‘this is true, this is false.’” Then comes a note from General Bonaparte, commanding the army in Italy, who finds time between two battles to write to M. de Saint-Pierre: “Your pen is a paint brush; all

that you paint one can see ; your works charm and comfort us ; you will be one of the men whom I shall see oftenest and with most pleasure in Paris." After the letters came visits from Louis, from Joseph, from Napoleon, who flatter and praise the writer of the day. His book never leaves them during the campaign in Italy, "it reposed under the pillow of the General-in-Chief, as Homer did under that of Alexander." Joseph endeavoured to imitate it in a pastoral called *Moïna*, which he respectfully submitted to Saint-Pierre. Napoleon envies from the bottom of his soul the peaceful existence of his host "in the bosom of nature." He expresses himself in accents of such sincerity that Bernardin hastens to offer him a small country house of which he had become the proprietor. The "Conqueror of Italy smiled in rather an embarrassed manner and murmured in a low voice some words about his retinue, equipment, and repose from labour," but he redoubled his politeness, and invited the celebrated man to dinner. Matters became somewhat strained when the celebrated man refused to enrol himself amongst the paid journalists. However, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre never had to complain of the Empire, and on his side Napoleon remained faithful to his admiration for *Paul and Virginia* ; we are assured that he re-read it several times at Saint Helena.

CHAPTER V.

WORKS OF HIS OLD AGE—THE TWO MARRIAGES—
DEATH OF BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE—HIS
LITERARY INFLUENCE.

WE have not yet got through half the *Complete Works*, and our task is nearly done. With the exception of certain pages, pleasant or valuable for the information which they contain, the rest might as well not have been published ; the reputation of the author would have lost nothing by it. In the month of September, 1789, appeared the *Vœux d'un solitaire*. The opening promises something rural :

“ On the first of May, of this year 1789, I went down into my garden at sunrise to see what condition it was in after the terrible winter, in which the thermometer on the 31st of December had gone down to 19° below freezing. . . .

“ On entering it I could see neither cabbages nor artichokes, white jasmin or narcissus ;

almost all my carnations and hyacinths had perished ; my fig-trees were dead, as were also my laurel-thyme which generally flowered in January. As for my young ivy, its branches were dried and its leaves the colour of rust.

“ However, the rest of my plants were doing well although their growth was retarded three weeks. My borders of strawberry-plants, violets, thyme, and primroses were variegated green, white, blue, and red ; and my hedges of honeysuckle, raspberry, and gooseberry bushes, roses and lilacs were all covered with leaves and buds. My avenues of vines, apple-trees, pear-trees, peach-trees, plum-trees, cherry-trees, and apricots were all in blossom. In truth, the vines were only beginning to open their buds, but the apricots had already their fruit set.

“ At this sight I said to myself,” . . . what he said to himself were certain reflections upon the “ interests of the human race,” and upon “ the revolutions of nature,” which remind him of “ those of the state,” . . . “ and I said to myself kingdoms have their seasons like the country, they have their winter and their summer, their frosts and their dews : the winter of France is passed, her spring is coming. Then full of hope I seated myself at the end of my garden on a little bank of turf and clover, in the shadow of an apple-tree in blossom, opposite a hive, the bees of

which hovered about humming on all sides. . . . And I began to have aspirations for my country." We know already from the *Études de la Nature* what his aspirations were; they were nothing very original or bold considering it was the year 1789, after the taking of the Bastille. Saint-Pierre demands that every employment shall be open to all, that individual liberty shall be assured, that there shall be an end put to clerical abuses, &c. The book had no success and possesses no interest for us; we may proceed.

Two years after the *Vœux d'un solitaire*, in 1791, appeared the tale entitled *La Chaumière Indienne*. A party of learned Englishmen (the Academies again!) undertake to start an encyclopædia. Each member receives a list of 3,500 questions, and sets out for a different country in order "to seek for . . . information upon all the sciences." The most learned of the band travels overland to the Indies, and on his way makes a collection of MSS. and rare books forming "ninety bales weighing altogether 9,550lbs. troy." He converses "with Jewish rabbis, protestant ministers, superintendents of Lutheran churches, catholic doctors, academicians from Paris, la Crusca, the Arcades, and twenty-four others of the most famous academies of Italy, Greek popes, Turkish mollahs, Armenian priests, the Seids, and Persian priests, Arab

sheiks, ancient Parsees, and Indian pundits. He prepares to return to London, enchanted to possess "such a splendid cargo of information," when he perceives that all he has learnt, all he has collected, only serve to confuse and render obscure the 3,500 questions on his list. In despair he goes to consult a celebrated Brahmin, who only tells him that the Brahmins know everything and tell nothing. A storm obliges him, just in the nick of time, to ask shelter in the cottage of a pariah, and this man teaches him more in an hour about the way to find the truth than all the academies of the world had been able to teach him in several years. One guesses that the pariah did not know how to read or write, and that his secret consisted in studying nature "with his heart and not with his mind." This amusing slight fancy is told gracefully and pleasantly.

Meanwhile the terror approached, and in spite of certain alarms, it was one of the most tranquil periods of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's life. After some months passed at the Jardin des Plantes, of which he was for a short time governor, he looked on at the revolutionary storm from the depths of a charming retreat, chosen by him, arranged by him, and which he owed to the mania of women to marry celebrated men.

We have not forgotten that from the moment of his first literary success several people proposed to him. After *Paul and Virginia* romantic and sensitive hearts turned more than ever towards him, and at last he allowed himself to be touched. The daughter of his printer, Mlle. Félicité Didot, had loved him for a long time. She "did not fear to own it to him," and was rewarded for so doing: he consented to marry her. He was fifty-five, she twenty.

He consented, making his own conditions however; his letter to Mlle. Didot is categorical. He wishes for a secret marriage. Further, he insists that his father-in-law shall buy him an island at Essonnes, and build him a house there. "It will take three months to build the house and make it habitable; when it is ready your parents will retire to Essonnes, taking you with them, and I shall rejoin you there for our marriage. I shall have a house, an island, and a wife, without any one in Paris knowing anything about it. I shall establish you on my island with a cow, some fowls, and Madelon, who understands to perfection how to raise them. You will have books, flowers, and the neighbourhood of your parents. I shall certainly come to see you as often as possible."

According to what follows in the correspondence this arrangement was not to Mlle

Didot's taste. She dreamed of sharing his glory, and he offered her the post of his house-keeper. He did not insist upon the secret marriage, but on the question of the country he would not give in, declaring that he could only be happy there. "When my business forces me to be in Paris, I shall write to you frequently. You will be the reward of my labours ; I shall come to forget in your bosom the troubles of the town. Until I can have you always with me as my companion, I shall come and pass weeks, whole months with you. This is my plan of life. I shall rise in the morning with the sun. I shall go into my library and occupy myself with some interesting study, for I have a large amount of material to put in order. At ten breakfast, which you will have prepared yourself (he held to this) will re-unite us. After breakfast I shall return to my work, and you can accompany me, if the cares of the household do not call you elsewhere ; I presume that you will occupy yourself with them in the morning. At three o'clock a dinner of fish, vegetables, poultry, milk-food, eggs, and fruit produced on our island, will keep us an hour at table. From four to five rest, and a little music ; at five, when the heat will have passed, fishing, or a walk in our island until six. At six we shall go to see your parents and walk

in the neighbourhood. At nine a frugal supper."

Mlle. Didot understood that she might take it or leave it, and resigned herself to become the head-servant of the Island of Essonnes. If she had cherished any illusions as to what was before her, she was not long in losing them. The letters which her husband wrote to her after their marriage have been published. This is the beginning of the first one, written during a journey of Mme. de Saint-Pierre to Paris.

"I send thee, my dear, some wire for my tenant, your mother's carpet-bag, some potatoes, some beetroots, which thou dost not much like, but which necessity will perhaps render agreeable to thee. If thou wilt share them with citizen M—— junior, thou wilt give me pleasure. In this case thou wilt send Madelon with them, and wilt give her also the wire intended to clear the conduit to the well of my house. . . ."

Then comes a long paragraph on the nails of various kinds of which he has need for his workmen, and he continues: "Dost thou remember how many handkerchiefs I had? there were only eleven here," and in a P.S., "There is no sugar here at all, send me a pound of moist sugar."

He had not deceived her, nevertheless his happiness was great in this first union. He did

not certainly use much coquetry with this young wife, who was about thirty years younger than himself. Everlasting household details: "Send me some apples." . . . "Sow some cucumbers." . . . "Do not forget the haricot beans." . . . "Why have a pig when we have need of potatoes?" It was not worth while having married a poet! As for him, the country enchanted him, and he left his island as seldom as possible. He endeavoured to ignore events in Paris, so as to be able to prepare in peace his *Harmonies de la Nature*. "Putting aside all newspapers and books which might have told him of the mad excitement of his country, he made a solitude of his enclosure; and when the mists and hoar frost on the trees bare of leaves and singing birds, made the country look sad, *Virgil's eclogues*, *Telemachus*, and the *Vicar of Wakefield*, gave him in an ideal world, the happiness which no longer existed on the earth."¹ Let us remember this passage. The circumstances under which the *Harmonies* were composed explain the work.

The death of his father-in-law brought him back willingly or unwillingly to the world of reality. There was a burdensome liquidation, family dissensions, and worries of all kinds. Then Mme. de Saint-Pierre died in her turn,

¹ The Biography, by Aimé Martin.

leaving a daughter Virginia, and a son Paul. It was a general breaking up of things.

There are some people magnificently obstinate in being happy. Bernardin had the courage to begin life again. At sixty-three he married a pretty little schoolgirl, Mlle. Désirée de Pelleporc, whose exercises it amused him to correct, and who was dazzled with the idea of marrying the author of *Paul and Virginia*. He found that he had done quite the right thing. There is no more any question of cabbages in his letters to his second wife. Bernardin is in love, he wishes to please, and this old grey-beard finds again his imagination of twenty to write to his Désirée, his "joy," his "dear delight," his "everlasting love." She is ailing. "Do not distress thyself; I shall work beside thee; I shall comfort thee with my affection; I shall kiss thy feet and warm them with my love." She writes to him and he is overcome with admiration: "Ah! how full of charm is thy last letter! it is an enchanting combination of youthful imagery, tenderness, philosophy, and loving religion, I admired that last thought of thine, it is new, it is sublime—ah! my second providence! &c. I have sent to invite Ducis to come and see us. If thou hadst not made me full of love for thee, thou wouldst have filled me with pride."

Poor Félicité never had so much attention in her life as Désirée in this one day, and that is not all ; the letter ends thus : “ I believe that the new moon of yesterday will make a change in the weather. Meantime she has announced herself by heavy showers ; but this abundance of water accelerates the growth of the vegetables ; it is necessary to their progress and their needs : the month of May is an infant who would always be at the breast. I embrace thee, my love, my delight, my month of May. (*Signed*) Thy friend, thy lover, thy husband.”

Sainte-Beuve thought this ending charming. “ This month of May ” he says, “ which is *an infant that would always be at the breast*, is it not the most graceful and most speaking picture, above all addressed to a young wife, a young mother ? ”

It is Bernardin who now does the commissions, and he does not bring Désirée any nails or moist sugar. Not a bit of it ! He brings her crayons and colours, perfumery, a fine tent for her garden. His impatience to return is extreme ; he no longer lives away from her, is capable of nothing without her. “ The absence of the clear-sighted wife leaves the husband only one eye to see with, deprives him of the best part of his senses. Thy absence, my angel, throws me more and more into a

state of indolence which I cannot overcome. It is absolutely imperative that I come to see thee, and that thou return, my love." In another letter: "I must return to kindle my flame in the sunlight of thy presence. . . . Good-bye, my delight ; I wish to live and die beside thee."

He does not doubt that the whole universe shares in this admiration for Désirée, who was moreover really charming, and the joy of his old age. One day when she is alone at Eragny, their country house on the Oise, which had taken the place of the island of Essonnes, her husband sends her some details about the battle of Eylau. He tells her that two days before the battle Napoleon had written in an album found in a country house: "Happy retreat of peace, why art thou so near to the scene of the horrors of war?" "Does it not seem," continues Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, "that he was thinking of our Eragny? If he had seen thee there with our dear family, dost thou think he would ever have fought that battle? I warn thee that if it falls to my turn to address him, I shall charge thee with the correction of my speech." Mlle. de Pelleporc had certainly not been taken in like Mlle. Didot.

It was in his capacity of Academician that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was liable to be called upon to address the Emperor. He had

belonged to the Academy¹ ever since Napoleon had re-established it (1803). He had belonged to the Institute in the division of moral and political science from its foundation in 1795. In the same year he had charge of the course of ethics at the Normal School, and the Normal School had been suppressed almost directly, which was very lucky, for he did not know how to speak. The elevation of the Bonaparte family sufficed to crown his old age. He was pensioned, decorated, and well treated by the Emperor. The Parisian world petted and flattered him. On one of his journeys to Paris he writes to his second wife: "What is to become of our former dreams of rural solitude? How is it possible, in the midst of so much writing to be answered, and of visits active and passive, to make a fair copy of any pages of my old or new *Études*? I am like the corn-beetle, living happily in the midst of his family, in the shadow of the harvest-field; should a ray of the rising sun light up the emerald and gold of his sheath, then the children seeing him, take possession of him and shut him up in a

¹ That is to say to the class of French language and literature at the Institute which the French Academy revived, except for the title, at the time of the re-organisation of the Institute by Bonaparte. (Decreed January 22, 1803.)

little cage, choking him with cake and flowers, believing that they make him happier with their caresses than he was in the bosom of his family." Of course not a word of this great boredom is to be believed in. The little beetle is enchanted, like all literary beetles, to be covered with flowers and shut up in those beautiful cages which are called aristocratic salons. He would be perfectly happy if he had a good temper."

But his temper is worse than ever. He had never had so many quarrels, and there is a concert of recrimination among his colleagues. The Academy is his favourite field of battle, and two of its sittings above all have, thanks to him, remained memorable. At the first one he was in the right; it was in 1798. Religion was still suppressed, and many people would not allow the name of God to be spoken. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had been entrusted with the report upon some meeting, and into this report he had bravely insinuated a profession of religious faith. Cries of fury arose in the hall, and through the noise one heard Cabanis crying out: "I swear that there is no God! and I demand that his name shall not be mentioned within these walls!" Another wished to do battle with the blasphemer, and prove to him, sword in hand, that God did not exist. They all abused him, threatened him, and laughed at him, but he held

his own against the storm, and refused to efface the scandalous passage. The Academy refused to read his report in open meeting.

His other great battle was in favour of a less glorious cause. He found means to raise a tempest apropos of the Dictionary, in which he wished to insert some sentiment. "Just imagine," he wrote to Désirée, "that they have put in their Dictionary under the word *appertain*, 'It appertains to a father to chastise his children.' I told them that it was strange that among a hundred duties which bind a father to his children, they should have chosen the one which would make him odious to them. Thereupon Morellet the harsh, Suard the pale, Parny the amorous, Naigeon the atheist, and others all quoted the Scripture, and all talking at once, assailed me with passages from it, and united themselves against me as they always do. Then, becoming warm in my turn, I told them their quotations were those of pedants and collegians, and that if I were alone in my opinion, I should hold it against them all. They put it to the vote, all raising their hands to heaven, and as they congratulated themselves on having a very large majority, I told them that I challenged their statement because they were all celibates. These are the kind of scenes to which I expose myself when I wish to uphold some natural truth ; but

it suits me from time to time to defend the laws of nature against people who only know those of fortune and credit." (Letter of September 23, 1806.)

It was hard on him ! He had persuaded himself that he was persecuted by the Institute. In his mind the chief occupation of the Institute was to invent some bad turn against M. de Saint-Pierre. In 1803 Maret asked him for his vote. Bernardin replies : "Of what use can the vote of a solitary man be to you, one who has long been persecuted by the body to which you aspire ? It can only do you harm. The atheists who govern the Institute, and against whom I have never ceased to contend, have not only deprived me of all influence, be it in preventing me from reading from the tribune at our public meetings the papers which my class have prepared for that purpose ; be it in hindering me from obtaining the smallest post to help me to bring up my family, but they have even taken pleasure in publishing abroad that the First Consul said on one occasion : 'I shall never give any employment to a writer who disseminates error.' Thus they have even deprived me of hope.

"That is not all, they have lately been trying to take from me my actual means of subsistence." Here follows a long list of grievances.

He has only received £24 indemnity on an occasion when other members of the Academy have had £48; one of his pensions has been reduced £2 per month; his works have been mutilated by the Censor; he hardly dares to present to the public his theory of the tides for fear of sharing the fate of Galileo; he expects to be exiled, compelled to find at a distance a spot "wherein to place the cradles of his three children and his own grave." The admiration of the world would be powerless to protect him against the stubborn animosity of his colleagues in the Institute. "I resemble those saints who attract from afar the homage and the prayers of men, but who near at hand are bitten by insects." This is all nonsense; he had discussed persecutions too much with J. J. Rousseau.

It is not surprising that he was detested by most of his colleagues. Andrieux remembers M. de Saint-Pierre as "a hard, ill-natured man." It is just to add that those who liked him—Ducis, for instance—liked him very much, and that he knew how to take pains to keep his friends. There was no middle course with him: he was hateful or delightful.

He continued to write to the end of his life. "He made a point," says his biographer, "of never letting a single day pass without writing

down some observations on nature, if it were only a single line. The result was, in the long run, a multitude of rough notes, hardly decipherable, written upon scraps of paper, which he compared to the Sibylline leaves blown about by the wind, and of which, according to the intention of the author, we have collected the best in his *Harmonies*."

He also continued to publish without succeeding in shaking his reputation, though it was not his fault if it remained intact, for from the date of the *Chaumière Indienne* one can count on one's fingers the pages which are not worthless.

The *Harmonies de la Nature* (three vols., 1796) is only a tame repetition of the *Études de la Nature*. We must recall under what conditions the *Harmonies* was written. It required a miracle of faith or fixed resolution to persevere under the Terror, in teaching that there is no evil in the heart of man any more than in the rest of creation. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre accomplished this miracle, but it was useless for him to shut himself up in his study with *Telemachus* and the *Vicar of Wakefield*; inspiration did not come, and he had to content himself with sifting the same ideas with nothing new but a degree more of exaggeration.

The arguments in favour of final causes surpasses in naïveté, if possible, those of the

Études. The foresight of creation has no limit: "Not only has nature given us vegetation suitable to our physical needs, but she has produced some in connection with our moral enjoyment which have become the symbols of it by the duration of their verdure; such as the laurel for victory, the olive for peace, the palm for glory. They have been made to grow on all those sites which by their melancholy and religious aspect seem destined for burial places." These last, which nature has created expressly "to decorate our tombs," and which for this reason are named "funereal trees," are divided into two groups having "opposite characteristics. Those in the first group let their long and slender branches trail to the earth, and one sees them waving about at the pleasure of the wind, looking dishevelled and as though deploring some misfortune. The second group of funereal trees includes those which grow in the form of obelisks or pyramids. If the dishevelled trees seem to carry our regrets towards the earth, these with their upright branches seem to direct our hopes heavenwards."

This example will suffice.

The goodness of man appears to him to be more apparent than ever. "I repeat, for the consolation of the human race, moral evil is as foreign to man as physical evil, both only spring

from a deviation from the natural law. Nature made man good." This goodness would be plain to all at once if they would put into practice M. de Saint-Pierre's plan of education, and it could hardly be put off much longer. "A day will come, and I already see its dawn, when Europeans will substitute in the hearts of their children the wish to serve their fellow-creatures for the fatal ambition to be the first amongst them, and when they will recognise that the interest of each of them is the interest of the human race."

A few new scientific ideas come in to prove that the author is incorrigible on this point. "If the forces of the vegetable kingdom reflect and augment the heat of the sun, if they effect the atmosphere and the water, they have no less influence upon the solid globe of the earth, of which they extend the circumference from year to year. It is quite certain that each plant leaves upon the globe a solid and permanent deposit, and that it is out of the sum total of these vegetable remains that the circumference of the globe is annually augmented." We could* have pardoned him this theory before the works of Lavoisier, but coming after, they betray a greater amount of ignorance that can be allowed even to a poet in speaking of science.

He has also an extraordinary theory upon

the chemical composition of the sun. "If it was allowed to a being as limited as I am to dare to speculate about a star which I have not even had the happiness to see through a telescope, I should say that the *material of which it is composed is gold*, because gold is the heaviest of all known metals ; which would apply to the sun placed in the centre of our universe. . . . Its light . . . gilds every object that it strikes, and seems to be volatilised gold. . . . We are assured that it forms the gold in the depths of the earth." Mystical reasons confirm Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in his opinion. "Gold is the prime mover in societies of human beings as the sun is in the universe. Gold sets in motion all social harmonies amongst civilised as well as uncivilised peoples."

It is always through sentiment that he makes his scientific discoveries. "Evidence is but the harmony of the soul with God . . . thus the mind has no science if the heart has no conscience. Certainty is then after all a sentiment, and this sentiment is only the result of the laws of nature. . . . I should then define science as the sentiment of the laws of nature in relation to man. . . . This definition of science in general applies to all sciences in particular. . . . Astronomy . . . is only the feeling of the laws which exist between the stars and men."

In virtue of "the laws which exist between the stars and men," he knows that the other planets are inhabited, and he could describe their Fauna and Flora, their landscapes, and the manners of the inhabitants. The men on the planet Mercury are philosophers ; those on Venus "must give up all their time to love," to the dance, to festivals and songs. The character of those of Jupiter no doubt resembles that of the maritime peoples of Europe ; "they must be industrious, patient, wise, and thoughtful, like the Danes, the Dutch, and the English." On all the planets, the souls of the just fly away after death into the sun, where they are better placed than anywhere else for enjoying a view of the whole universe. "It is there without doubt that you are unfortunate, Jean-Jacques, who, having reached the end of this life, behold a new one in the sun !" It is there that Bernardin hopes to go to find again his master, and from whence in spirit he sees himself throwing "a triumphant glance to earth where men weep, and where he is no longer." So ends the *Harmonies de la Nature* in a sort of ecstasy.

It is deadly dull reading. You are soon surfeited, as after a feast of nothing but sweet dishes. There is too much feeling, too much happiness ; the world is too well-arranged, too engineered, too highly coloured and varnished.

One agrees in the judgment which the book inspired in Joubert: "Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's style is like a prism which tires the eyes. After one has read him for long one is charmed to see that the grass and trees have less colour in nature than they have in his writings. His harmonies make us love the discords which he banishes from the world, and which one comes across at every step. Nature certainly has her music, but happily it is rare. If reality afforded the melodies which these gentlemen find everywhere, one would live in an ecstatic languor, and die of inanition."

The works which succeeded to the *Harmonies de la Nature* are not worth spending time over any more than his posthumous ones.¹ When we have excepted the *Café de Surate*, a charming satirical tale of a few pages, and the fragments on J. J. Rousseau, upon which we have drawn largely in retracing the history of their acquaintance, we may dispense with reading the rest. On the whole Bernardin de Saint-Pierre is complete in a single book, the *Études de la Nature*,

¹ We give the titles of them: *De la Nature de la morale* (1798), *Voyage en Silésie* (1807), *La Mort de Socrate*, drama (1808), *Empsael* and *la Pierre d'Abraham*, philosophical novels in the form of dialogues, *le Café de Surate*—fragments on Rousseau, some accounts of travels, some pamphlets and fragments of the *Amazôn*.

on condition that we take one of the copies perfected by the addition of *Paul and Virginia*.

His last years were the happiest of his long career. They were passed innocently in observing his flowers, adoring his young wife, and in realising at last on paper his project of an ideal colony, without fatigue or expense. It was the best way. He occupied himself every day for an hour or two in organising it according to the laws of nature, bringing up the children there to the sound of horns and flutes, and obtaining results without a precedent, which he recorded in the annals of the young state.¹

The colony was situated on the banks of the Amazon, because, as a child, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had told himself a story of how he embarked for the Amazon, and there founded a republic. It was above all distinguished for a fabulous abundance of everything. On fête days the citizens took their places at public tables, at which were served whole whales, without counting an infinity of other dishes. Contempt of systems had there produced some almost incredible scientific and industrial successes; people went about in balloons formed like fish, and capable of being steered; one saw "camels laden with provisions, led by negroes, and sledges drawn by reindeer." All the inhabi-

¹ See the fragments of the *Amazon*.

tants of this favoured spot were good, virtuous, and happy.

It was an inoffensive and harmless mania. In the end I really believe that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was no longer surly and bellicose, except in the Institute. There he certainly was so, but he paid dearly for it. What did they not impute to him for crime? They reproached him for sending his son to collège, his daughter to Écouen, after having written against public education in France. It is what the adversaries of our university system do every day ; we blame and we submit, because we cannot do otherwise. They reproached him with having been servile in his intercourse with Napoleon, whom he compared in an academical oration to an eagle "advancing in the very centre of the storm." He certainly would have done better not to flatter the master, but he was in such good company ! We pass over other absolutely absurd grievances. His enemies returned his blows with interest; and, being vindictive, he died without making peace with them.

In the month of November, 1813, being then in Paris, he felt that his life was ebbing ; several apoplectic attacks had reduced his strength. He hastened to return to his home at Eragny, to see again his garden, the forest of Saint-Germain, the banks of the Oise, and there he slowly

passed away, filling his eyes with the splendours of the world. He awaited death with serenity, as it becomes a sage to await the accomplishment of a law of nature, talking peacefully with those around him of the terrors which it generally inspires. He said that our fear of death arises from the fact that "the thought of it does not enter familiarly enough into our education." It is always spoken of as something strange, like a misfortune happened to some one else ; we are even surprised at it, so that there seems to be nothing natural in an act which is being accomplished ceaselessly. Listen to the history of a malady he adds : "I do not believe ever to have heard of one in which death did not come from the fault of the sick person, or from the doctor ; never from the will of God."

His heart never failed him except in seeing his dear Désirée weep. "I see her," he said, "incessantly occupied in holding back my soul which is ready to escape." For the last time he had himself carried into his garden. A Bengal rose-bush was still covered with flowers, but the winter had turned its leaves yellow. "Tomorrow," said the dying man to his wife, "the yellow leaves will no longer be there." On the 21st of January, 1814, the earth was white with snow, the air misty, and a cold wind shook the bare trees. At mid-day the sun pierced through

the mist, and fell upon the face of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who died breathing the name of God. He was seventy-seven years old. His death passed unobserved in the midst of the great events which were then agitating France.

He had intrusted his reputation and his works to his wife ; he could not have left them in better hands. The charming Désirée has been the faithful and tender guardian of his memory, a guardian sometimes blind ; but who would think of reproaching her with that ? She married again, later, an ardent admirer of her first husband, Aimé Martin, the author of the great biography of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and the indefatigable editor of his works. Together they raised an altar to his memory. One is obliged to challenge Aimé Martin's romantic and enthusiastic biography, but one could not read without being touched, the pages in which the youthful love affairs of the hero are poetised and magnified out of all proportion, for those details can only have been supplied by his widow. Désirée idealised for posterity even his most vulgar adventures.

The man was soon forgotten, and then was invented the legend of which we have spoken at the beginning of this book. The public very much dislikes to admit that there can be any disagreement between a writer and his works.

It made of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre a reflection of his writings, a very gentle and universally benevolent man without any fault except being too over-sensitive. The obstinate combatant of the Academy became transformed in the imagination of the crowd into an easy-going man, good-natured and tearful, until his outline was effaced from men's memory. Nothing remains to-day but an undefined shadow, a vague something, and this something still finds means to have an insipid expression. It is a good thing to restore to the original his angry brow and bitter expression.

An analogous disaster awaited almost all his works. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre enjoyed the dangerous honour of having disciples much greater than himself. His unobtrusive halo was lost sight of in the glitter of Chateaubriand and the radiance of Lamartine. He assisted at the literary triumphs of the first; but instead of rendering each other mutual homage, master and disciple treated each other coldly. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre could not without impatience allow "the most covetous of honour among his heirs," according to the expression of Sainte-Beuve, to throw him into the shade. Chateaubriand, at first eulogistic, was not long before he became irritated at hearing malevolent critics compare the elegant simplicity of his

predecessor to his own pomp of style. Towards the year 1810, some one having asked Bernardin if he knew Chateaubriand, the old man replied, "No, I do not know him ; I have in my time read some extracts of the *Genie du Christianisme* ; his imagination is too strong." They certainly became acquainted after the nomination of Chateaubriand to the Academy in 1811. We do not find that anything resulted from it, but the following lines from the *Memoires d'outre Tombe* : "A man whose brush I have admired and always shall admire, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, was wanting in judgment, and unfortunately his character was on a level with his judgment. How many pictures are spoilt in the *Études de la Nature* by the writer's limited intelligence and want of elevation of soul !"

Lamartine, on the contrary, was the most grateful of pupils, always eager to acknowledge his master, and make the best of him. *Paul and Virginia* had been the favourite book of his childhood, and the poet paid his debt royally to the favourite volume by giving it a place of honour in two of his own works. Jocelyn read and re-read *Paul and Virginia*. Graziella is lost from having heard it only once. Her soul, until then dormant, revealed itself to her in the soul of Virginia. Her beautiful impassive face becomes suddenly overspread with the stormy tints and

lines of passion. One hour has sufficed to transform an innocent and joyous child into a palpitating woman, ripe for love and its sufferings, and it is Bernardin de Saint-Pierre who has accomplished this miracle.

It was all in vain ; such glorious homage could not protect the bulk of his work against an indifference which became ever more and more profound. The reputation of the author of the *Études de la Nature* has dispersed in our day like smoke, so much so indeed that in establishing the literary relation of Chateaubriand and Lamartine, their direct precursor is usually suppressed ; they jump over him to J. J. Rousseau. Every one of us has forgotten what we owe to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Maurice de Guérin said in 1832, after having read the *Études de la Nature* : " This book sets at liberty and illuminates a sense which we all possess, but which is generally obscure and without activity ; the sense which gathers up for us physical beauties, and presents them to the soul." It has not been given to many writers to awaken amongst the masses a sleeping faculty, and the event should be of sufficient importance for us not to lose the remembrance of it. But in our day we are accustomed to observe this sense which " gathers up physical beauties " active within us, and increasing with-

out intermission the treasure of our sensations of incomparable enjoyments. This all seems so natural to us, that we have no more gratitude for him who "set at liberty and illuminated" this precious faculty in the souls of our grandfathers and grandmothers.

There is the same ingratitude amongst modern writers who do not seem to have remembered what they owe to him. Not content with having loved nature with a contagious tenderness, Bernardin has bequeathed to his successors the first grand models of descriptive landscapes, and restored to the French language a picturesque vocabulary of which it had been deprived for two hundred years. These are two immense services by which he has exercised a great influence on the literature of the nineteenth century. Without the *Études de la Nature* not only *René* and *Atala*, *Jocelyn* and *Graziella*, but the *Génie du Christianisme* and the *Méditations* would have been different from what they are. Chateaubriand and Lamartine would have followed a somewhat different bent, and the whole of the modern school would have followed their lead. It is a very great honour to have given impulse to the descriptive literature of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, if Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had not possessed another title to glory

his name would no longer be known except to literary men.

But he had another, over which a very faithful public has undertaken to watch. The people, who never forget what has profoundly touched them, have guarded the memory of *Paul and Virginia*. They love these two children, so beautiful, so unhappy ; and we still, find in the homes of the peasants penny engravings of Épinde's picture in glaring colours, in which are represented their games, their young love and their tragical end. On a day of inspiration Bernardin de Saint-Pierre conquered the glory, enviable above all others, and which is given to few ; he created imaginary but living characters, beings who never existed, and who nevertheless remain more real and more alive than thousands of creatures of flesh and blood ; more alive, if I dare to say so, than the heroes and heroines of his most illustrious disciples. Jocelyn is already forgotten by the world, Atala is no more than an empty shadow, but the popular imagination will for a long time yet keep in mind the little Virginia sheltering her Paul under her petticoat, and those two laughing heads flying together in the shower.

THE END.

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